CONTENTS

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

We're busy getting ready to attend the SLA conference in New York at the beginning of June <http://www.sla.org>. For those who can't attend we'll be posting daily dispatches to the FreePint Bar to let you know what everyone's talking about. We're also lining up interviews with key people in various parts of the information industry. Many thanks to Factiva for sponsoring FreePint's attendance at this major event in the information calendar.

I had a great time last week in Denmark talking at a conference for information people working in the media. If you haven't been to 'Wonderful Copenhagen' then I would highly recommend it. Information get-togethers like this are taking place all the time and I feel rejuvenated by the tremendous amount of voluntary effort that information people are willing to put into organising such events. Bravo to everyone involved.

Our forthcoming Exchange workshop on 'Freedom of Information' is coming up shortly in July <http://www.freepint.com/exchange/>. If you're running an information-related event yourself then submit details for some free promotion on the FreePint Events page at <http://www.freepint.com/events>.

A number of people at the conference in Denmark said how useful they find FreePint but were vexed at how it covers its costs. Especially since they've never been asked to pay for anything for it. It is indeed tricky to make money when you give virtually everything away for free. Especially if you're daft enough to give it a name like 'FreePint'! Anyway ...

We've packed lots of good stuff into today's newsletter. I'm sure most readers will find both articles of particular interest and there's also the usual mix of tips and news from the Bar. The easy-to-read fully-formatted version of this newsletter now has photos of the authors <http://www.freepint.com/issues>.

Finally, don't forget to make your nomination for the 'CILIP/FreePint Online Community Award' <http://www.freepint.com/events/cilip-2003>. Congratulations to ResourceShelf.com for securing financial assistance in the form of sponsorship from MuseGlobal. Many thanks to Plain Text for their valued work in proofreading each edition of FreePint.

Cheers
William

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

This week's selected listings are below. All new jobs are posted to the Bar and Bar Digest (circulation 10,000+) and matched against the 1000+ live job seeker profiles. This week's Bar listing is at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23662> and last week's is at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23581>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Strategic Head of Science Collections
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2467>
Do you have experience of managing scientific, academic or business collections? Two senior level vacancies currently available.
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Senior Researcher - Commercial services
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2468>
You'll identify appropriate material from TV, radio and photographic archives for use in other productions, products and services.
Recruiter: BBC

Head of Libraries
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2474>
Ready to run a library service? Live in Birmingham? Manage staff over 3 sites, develop services, use your 2yrs+ management experience.
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

Research Assistant
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2478>
Can you manage the research information flow to facilitate analysts' decision-making processes?
Recruiter: Investment Firm

[The above jobs are paid listings]

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

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

The CILIP/FreePint Online Community Award

Since group communication and support online have become so important, the Online Community Award is your chance to nominate any online community project from any sector that has brought people with common interests together in a virtual environment:

<http://www.freepint.com/events/cilip-2003/>

Free Pint Forthcoming Articles

* Trade Mark Databases * Children and the Internet * Charities * Registered Design Databases * Visual Representation of Information * Qualifications in Info & Knowledge Management * Writing for the Web * Alternative Search Strategies * Online Discussion Groups *

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>.

MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES
from Don Crowder

Don Crowder <http://www.doncrowder.com> is a serious musician and part-time computer geek who edits the site and e-zine for Phil & Moke's Secret Free Place <http://www.maxpatch.com>.

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

- <http://www.programming.de/> - Johannes Wallroth's amazing web site is a virtual gold mine with learning resources for budding programmers, free Windows software, excellent photography and digital artwork.

- <http://security.kolla.de/> - Spyware is a major concern for every online computer user. The free software "Spybot - Search & Destroy" is, in my opinion, the best available solution.

- <http://www.xnview.com> - Even my non-technical wife is convinced that XnView is a wonderful tool for manipulating images (especially jpegs) and best of all it's free.

- http://www.gregorybraun.com/WebTime.html - I set my watch to the time on my computer, but first I set my computer to a traceable standard with Gregory Braun's free "Webtime" (for Windows).

- http://www.sci.fi/~borg/rambooster/index.htm - My PC gets a heavy workout every day, and I often had RAM problems before I installed RamBooster. This is a free set-it-and-forget-it utility.

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

A recent informal poll by FreePint asked whether people have firewalls on their home computers. It transpired that only about 5% of those asked did. This is a *very important issue*. You should have a firewall on your home PC. There's no excuse. It doesn't even have to cost you anything. For some advice on which firewall to use, check out the FreePint Bar thread at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b21289>.

Whereas most Bar topics get an almost immediate response, there are always tricky research queries that seem to stump everyone:

- Can you locate "research which assesses & classifies 'life coaching' and self-help programs"? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23655>

- What about the enquirer who is "looking for the upper permitted limit of foreign ownership in companies registered locally ... in all world territories"? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23642>

- Are there bodies that give accreditation to documents produced by organisations? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23550>

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>.

See you at SLA in New York!

Factiva is proud to sponsor keynote speaker Madeleine Albright, the former US Secretary of State on Wednesday, June 11. In addition Factiva is also sponsoring two pre-conference events on Sunday, June 8 entitled "Beyond Marketing: Consultative Strategies for Information Professionals" and "Learning is Hot: Simple, Cost-Effective Tools & Tips for Building Effective Learning Programs." To get more information, visit www.sla.org. Hope you can be there!

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

"The Future of Chemical Information in the UK" - Informal discussion and brainstorm session on the subject. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e209>, London, 27th May.

"STN Biotechnology Forum" - A free event looking at "the use of other information sources in addition to STN in order to locate comprehensive sequence information in the patent literature". <http://www.freepint.com/go/e208>, London, 30th May.

"News and Media Information on the Internet" - Learn how to organise your research and contacts in a media environment. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e196>, London, 2nd June.

"Using statistics to manage your service" - How to manage your library or information service. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e200>, Sheffield, 4th June.

"LIBRARIES: a new community focus for learning and regeneration" - Discuss the "future significance of libraries in the context oflifelong learning and regeneration policies". <http://www.freepint.com/go/e206>, Birmingham, 6 June.

"Knowledge Without Frontiers" - The 34th BIALL annual study conference will look at development and devolution within Europe <http://www.freepint.com/go/e187>, Cardiff, 13th - 16th June.

"Competia International Symposium 2003: Competitive and Strategic Intelligence" - share ideas, practices and tools at this 2 day event. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e147> Quebec, 2nd - 4th June.

"Leveraging Intelligence for Organizational Effectiveness" - Experience "new ways of thinking and utilizing intelligence." <http://www.freepint.com/go/e186>, Virginia, 9th - 14th June.

"Outsourcing: threat or opportunity?" - "Should subcontracted /outsourced information and research become an integral part of the organisations modus operandi in 2003?" <http://www.freepint.com/go/e207>, London, 12th June.

Submit details of your event today for free promotion <http://www.freepint.com/events>.

TIPS ARTICLE
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/150503.htm#tips>

"Net the Ancestors: The Internet and Family History"
By Jonathan Crowhurst

Jonathan is a Tax and Competition Law Library assistant at Norton Rose. He is going to City University in October 2003 to read an MSc in Library and Information Studies. Jonathan graduated from the University of Leicester in 1998 with a first class degree in Ancient History and Archaeology and worked in market research and insurance before deciding to become an information professional last year. He enjoys re-enactment, history and genealogy amongst other things in his spare time.

Family history is not new, but it is a hobby that has grown hugely in recent years. We all want to know where we come from, where our heritage lies. Perhaps we want to uncover family skeletons in the closet, trace a family line as far back in time as possible, to find out where our roots lie. Genealogy can be addictive - the further into it you get, the more you uncover about your past.

My first bit of advice, perhaps strange for FreePint, would be: do not make the Internet the 'be all and end all' of your research. Your living relatives are the best source of information in the world. I don't wish to state the obvious, but your parents, grandparents or great grandparents are invaluable, as well as aunts, uncles and so on. They may, if nothing else, be able to remember if anyone else in the family has been working on a similar project, saving wasted time and resources. They will be a fantastic source of stories, paperwork (birth, marriage and death certificates), family bibles and so on. So start here first. Work with what is known and extant.

Second, the Internet cannot do the research for you. You have to seek sources out and work with them, using them as an aid to the work above. Third, there is so much material held in national and local record offices, archives, libraries and museums that only a fraction of it is available online. The Internet can allow you to search these databases easily, but visits to your local, state or national records centre won't be replaced by it. What I want to do, having got these caveats out of the way, is to share some sites I personally have found invaluable in my own family history project.

Main Sites

The first site I would go to, especially if you are just starting out in genealogy, is the famous Cyndi's List <http://www.cyndislist.com>. There is much advice and information here which anyone will find invaluable. I cannot recommend it highly enough as a starting point. It is a database of over 100,000 sites organised alphabetically, but fully cross-referenced. This site demonstrates one of the great strengths of the Internet for genealogists, in that it brings a lot of resources together in one place. I found a number of great "starting out" guides here which gave excellent advice <http://www.cyndislist.com/howtotut.htm>.

Another great "catch all" site is <http://www.genhomepage.com/>, in similar vein but less comprehensive than Cyndi's List. An alternative site performing a similar function, although geared to the American market, is <http://www.ancestry.com/main1.htm>.

At this point I should mention that it is necessary to pay some form of subscription or fee to access the full functionality of some Internet family history sites, as is the case with Ancestry.com. RootsWeb <http://www.rootsweb.com/> is supported by Ancestry.com and free to access.

Databases

The Internet's other main strength for the researcher is that it will allow you to go beyond the information obtained from talking to relatives, or records they have been able to provide, by searching local, state or county and national record offices. There are a number of good main sites which act as databases if you are researching a family name and have, say, the name and a date of birth, marriage or death. One word of caution, however, is that the records you find online are only as accurate as the person transcribing them onto the database.

An excellent starting point is the site run by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints at <http://www.familysearch.org/>. Here it is possible to search the database <http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp> with at least a first and last name using the "ancestral file" feature. You can use the drop-down boxes for an event like birth or marriage, and a year range, or the country of origin for that person. This will then bring up a pedigree chart for as far back through the generations as Familysearch has details available. I managed this with the last name I had for a member of our family and their year of birth (around 1820); a pedigree chart came up beyond that, which was great, as I did not have any official documentation beyond this person. Both Ancestry and RootsWeb provide similar but, to my mind, far more hit-and-miss facilities. The best thing about FamilySearch is that you can print the pedigree chart or individual record, and it is free!

The UK is well-served by the Public Record Office (PRO) <http://www.pro.gov.uk>. I could not write this article without referring to their special site for the 1901 Census of the British Isles which went online to great fanfare in 2002 <http://www.census.pro.gov.uk>. As is well known, the site was swiftly taken offline (on its first day!) after it crashed due to the sheer volume of hits it was taking as everyone tried to find details of their families in 1901. The saga is well-documented <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1737861.stm>, but the initial problems now seem to be ironed out and it is a great resource.

Searching the PRO index is free, but to view transcribed data costs 50p for an individual and then 50p for a list of all other people in that person's household. Viewing a digital image of the census page costs 75p. The system takes most credit cards (apart from Diners Club) and you have to sign up to an account session which lasts 48 hours before you have to re-charge your card. There is a minimum GBP5 charge per account session. It is also possible to use vouchers if you don't want to use a card. The FAQ list on the site gives further details and should answer most questions. It is really quite easy to search the index using the person search

facility, again it helps to have as much information as possible. Once you have entered the information you have, the search is run on the index. You can search the results but then have to use your account to view the full information if you find the person you are searching. All in all I would recommend this site, but with a lot of free stuff around on the web I probably would not make this my first port of call.

I just have space to mention a popular area among researchers, namely 'One Name Studies'. This is the study of a particular surname, rather than a family pedigree, and more can be found by visiting the web site of the 'Guild of One Name Studies' <http://www.one-name.org/>. This organisation is a UK based charity but is open to worldwide members who want to register a particular surname for study. If you are interested in a particular surname or variant, you are directed to their Register of one name studies. It contains around 7,000 names registered by Guild members as a subject of the study and generally worldwide occurrences of the surname will be there. If one name study is your thing the organisation costs GBP12 to join and GBP12 to register each surname.

The UK Researcher

The UK-based researcher cannot really beat <http://www.genuki.org.uk/> as a fantastic jumping-off point which is similar in breadth and depth to Cyndi's List but with a UK aspect. <http://www.familia.org.uk> gives details of family history resources at your local library. Family history resources held at public libraries by place can be found at <http://www.familia.org.uk/libraries.html>. At some point the UK researcher will need to visit the Family Records Centre: its web site <http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk/> details the information it holds, opening times, etc. This is a consortium of partners such as the British Library, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the General Register Office, and the National Archives. <http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk/partners.htm> lists these partners and more details can be found by clicking on the individual links to them.

The researcher will want the Topics section of the site, divided into sections such as births, marriages and deaths, religious records, wills, immigration and emigration records. Click on each item you are interested in, perhaps for example to find more information on obtaining a certificate for a "life event" like birth or marriage <http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk/topics/bmd_3.htm#engwales>.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I would say that the Internet is a fantastic resource for the budding genealogist. I have barely scratched the surface of what is available out there for the determined researcher: for example, you may want to disseminate your results through one of the genealogical software packages now available, such as the excellent

Generations package, or through your own Internet pages, then link them to one of the big main sites referred to above, then that is beyond the scope of this article. If you follow a few simple guidelines, using the Internet for genealogical research can only make your research easier and take you down avenues you might not have considered. As with most things in life, you will get out of genealogy only what you choose to put into it.

GOLD

In May 2002 John Kirriemuir discussed how video games and the academic sector overlap. Laurel A. Clyde tempted us with a few favourite Weblogs.

- FreePint No.112 16th May 2002. "Video Games Industry Research" and "Weblogs and Blogging - Part 2" http://www.freepint.com/issues/160502.htm

Two years ago in our tips article, Gillian Selman discussed politics and the Internet. Carl Clayton looked at some general library and information sites which you might find useful.

- FreePint No.87, 10th May 2001. "2001 - The Internet Election?" and "Information Provision for the Information Providers" http://www.freepint.com/issues/100501.htm

In issue 62, David Ogden covered primary and secondary resources on employment law. Micky Allen's interesting feature explained about GIS - Geographical Information Systems.

- FreePint No.62, 11th May 2000. "Idiots' guide to UK employment law sites on the Internet" and "Gimme a G for Global, a G for Geography" http://www.freepint.com/issues/110500.htm

In 1999 Emma Turner shared the importance of patent information and Andy Williamson looked at virtual communities.

- FreePint No.38, 13th May 1999. "Patent information on the Internet - can you afford to ignore it?" and "Lurking on Lists" http://www.freepint.com/issues/130599.htm

Five years ago William Hann interviewed six of the best known UK Internet professionals about Mecklermedia's Internet World UK Spring '98 at London's Olympia. James Gallagher described how the 'Refreshable Braille Display' works and how Webmasters can make their Websites Deafblind friendly.

- FreePint No.14, 14th May 1998. "Six Opinions on Internet World UK" and "Deafblind access to the Web" http://www.freepint.com/issues/140598.htm

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

"Naked in Cyberspace: How To Find Personal Information Online"
Written by Carole A Lane
Reviewed by Stephen Lafferty

Stephen Lafferty has an MSc. in Library and Information Management and has previously written on the subject of surveillance and privacy for FreePint <http://www.freepint.com/issues/030800.htm#feature>. He is interested in the collection and uses of information about consumers, data security and freedom of information.

Related links:

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

- Read customer comments and buy this book at Amazon.co.uk <http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0910965501/freepint0c> or Amazon.com <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0910965501/freepint00>

- "Naked in Cyberspace". 2nd Edition. ISBN 0910965501, published by CyberAge Books, written by Carole A Lane

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

- Read about other Internet Strategy books on the FreePint Bookshelf <http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/strategy.htm>

This book was written as a guide to researchers using the Internet to find information on individuals. Carole Lane is a professional researcher who has run her own company, Technosearch, since 1993 and as such her experience makes her a well-qualified author on this subject.

The book is divided in to four sections. The first deals with databases, the Internet and basic searching. The second contains information on searching for everything from friends, debtors to competitive intelligence. The third section describes many different types of databases available to the individual or to a suitably qualified professional. The final section contains further reading and lists of resources for researchers of personal information. As the book deals with so many different types of database and reasons for searching, it cannot be anything more than an introduction to searching on any given subject. Researchers who take on general assignments will find that this book has most to offer them.

Databases referred to by Lane include: Lexis-Nexis and Dialog; credit reference files maintained by Experian; tenant databases; driver and vehicle databases; human and robot-indexed search engines and directories like Google and Yahoo. Basic search instructions are given for Nexis and Dialog but the majority of the resources listed are provided with the URL and subject(s) covered.

One of the most interesting aspects of reading this book is comprehending the wealth of information that is potentially available on individuals. This is not a description of a '1984' society as information is scattered over thousands of public and private databases rather than held and collated centrally. In 1993 Rick Gates created the Internet Hunt and asked participants to find as much information as they could about Ross Stapleton (with his permission). Over the course of the hunt the teams gathered a total of 148 pieces of information about his life, work and past times. These included his employment by the CIA, the names of his parents and his then-fiancee, his computer's operating system, the text of his doctorate and all of his previous postings to a mailing list discussing privacy. This case indicates that we only ever add to our 'data shadows'. Records about our lives rarely disappear and can be freely available years after the event.

'Naked in Cyberspace' has several limitations, the first being that it is aimed almost entirely at an American audience. Information on resources available in other countries is occasionally given but researchers in those countries on those subjects will no doubt be aware of these already. The other major limitation is timeliness and is acknowledged by the author. Lane states that the book can only deal with the major free and subscription-based databases with smaller and niche market resources being passed over because of their limited appeal. Other limitations include poorly spelt UK addresses and telephone numbers given, for example '081' rather than '0208': this may be indicative of the quality of the updating for the second edition. Lane does provide a web site to keep readers appraised of post-publication changes to the content of the book.

This book would be most useful for an American researcher looking for information on American individuals. The amount of information presented in each chapter is considerable and the book and corresponding web site are an excellent starting point for researchers in many areas.

FREE PINT

FEATURE ARTICLE

"Business Continuity and Recovery - An Asian Perspective"
By Jane Macoustra

Jane Macoustra started her career at British Petroleum, progressing through Norton Rose and then Credit Suisse First Boston in London and Hong Kong, at Assistant Vice President level. She is currently working for Clifford Chance in Hong Kong, as an Information Officer and she also co-ordinates library services for the Asian region. During this time, she has covered every aspect of librarianship and library and information services, finds working in Asia Pacific an interesting challenge and loves living in Hong Kong with her family. She is currently serving as Director of the Asian Chapter of the Special Librarians Association.

[This document is the opinion of the author who writes in a personal capacity]

I first became involved in business continuity procedures after the Docklands bombing in 1996 at Canary Wharf in London, UK. After that episode, the company embarked on a recovery scheme that involved input from almost every employee. Since then (amongst many others) we have had 9/11 and Bali, a range of computer viruses and worms, which have wreaked havoc on infected systems. In Asia there is additional risk from extreme climate systems, which cause typhoons, flooding and landslips - not forgetting the possible disruption that could be caused by the outbreak of the SARS virus. All these types of problems can slow or halt business interests.

The aim of every company's business continuity plan is fast and efficient recovery to minimise the negative impact on its businesses. This article briefly examines business continuity and recovery from a Library and Information Services ("LIS") context, accepting that a LIS would be included as a small section of a complete corporate recovery process. This article does not dwell on any specific type of disaster, but for example purposes, the office would be considered unavailable to work in.

In Asia, the larger companies and corporations have business continuity planning and recovery procedures. However, as the following articles indicate, there are indications that the majority of smaller companies do not; and the reason appears to be based on cost factors. <http://www.asiacomputerweekly.com/acw_View Art.cfm?Artid=16852&catid=5&subcat=43> <http://www.computerworld.com/securitytopics/security/recovery/story/0,10801,79014,00.html>

A survey conducted by the National Diet Library in 1992 called the Library Preservation Needs Survey of National Libraries in Asia <http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/iflapac/survey.html> concluded that of the 20 libraries that were asked to take part in the survey, (from a response from 12) only two libraries agreed that emergency preparedness was an important part of a preservation programme. The survey was aimed at National libraries that retain a nation's collection of historical and probably irreplaceable materials, and not aimed at corporate libraries within an organisation.

In the current economic downturn with job losses and budget cut backs, my attention has been drawn to the fact that one of the first areas where an organisation will try and make savings, is in LIS. However, I am of the opinion that these organisations have not realised that they cannot operate normally without business-critical information. It is not until something has happened and they have lost these services that the importance of access to reliable business information becomes a priority. The LIS should be included in business continuity planning as an important part of the organisation.

Firstly, it is necessary to create a business continuity and recovery plan to undertake a detailed risk analysis project, specifying each type of disaster <http://www.disasterplan.com/>

that the company could be vulnerable to. The disaster types can range from an attack from a computer virus to loss of the working habitat. This function would normally be undertaken by a management committee, a dedicated disaster recovery team or outsourced to a professional company who specialise in this area ("The Team").

The team would assess the requirements of each department to ascertain what is needed in order to recover from each type of disaster and how the company would manage in an interim period if there were no offices from which the staff could work. These plans would include:

- Training staff on what to do in an emergency

- Evacuation procedures

- Assessment of the company's vital records and off-site storage facilities

- Insurance, including assessment of replacement value of entire library collection

- Building security

- How to contact/locate all staff - work out a plan so that staff would make contact using specific guidelines for accounting for staff

- Contact lists and communication details for all staff must be kept up-to-date on a regular basis

- Damage assessment of offices

- Restoration of power and utilities

- Electronic infrastructure. Restoring internal IT structures, servers, restoring back-up systems, intranets, web pages, telephones, faxes, & other electronic services, for working remotely

- Provision of emergency offices and appropriate hardware, software and system access to allow staff to work remotely from home

- Recovering damaged documentation, restoration of documents and clean up of offices

- Rebuild or redecoration of offices and replacement of hardware, furniture and shelving.

Library & Information Services

The Asian region is vast and library collections frequently include special collections from many different countries. Assessing the feasibility of replacing some of these collections is a challenge in itself.

Collection Format

The replacement value of a corporate library collection -- even a small one -- can be huge. The library catalogue can be used to generate holdings reports listed by publisher for all the library materials. Budget reports can also be useful for costing, where they exist. Since

copyright legislation <http://www.justice.gov.hk/Home.htm> (Ch 528, s23) for Hong Kong prohibits the replication of most materials, alternatives need to be found for replacement.

Internal documentation produced by the company can be maintained electronically, even if a hard copy is held on-site, because the organisation "owns" the work. Legal agreements and other important internal documentation can be scanned and the original documents sent to vital storage.

It is essential to define the exact requirements and the most important tools needed in the LIS. Assess which materials could be replaced electronically and the comparative costs for each medium. An insurance valuation should increase each year by the rate of inflation, or by another economic indicator, to cover the cost of replacement at current prices. A detailed insurance assessment of the contents of the library will assist in identifying what in the collection could be irreplaceable. If some materials are considered to be irreplaceable, decide on the use of fireproof storage onsite, off-site storage and the consequences of losing the collection.

Onsite v Offsite

A big problem that can occur with a special collection or vital records is deciding where to house them. Offices in Asian countries are air-conditioned at all times and documentation is therefore in a stable environment where it will not deteriorate quickly. Offices have water sprinklers for fire suppression; obviously in the event of a fire, the water sprinklers will turn on. Either way the documentation can be ruined - even if the records are housed in fire-proof cabinets they are not necessarily waterproof.

In Hong Kong, normal archive storage provision can be very basic in comparison to European or American standards, although the large archiving companies can offer the same standard of records protection that one would expect. The smaller archiving companies may only provide a warehouse to store the archive boxes in. However, there is sometimes no air-conditioning and the warehouse may store other items, such as furniture, and the archive boxes may not be placed above ground level on shelves, but stacked on the floor. Under normal archive storage conditions, records may be exposed to termite or pest abuse, especially in a tropical climate with high humidity. The dreaded cockroach is among many other tropical bugs found in abundance in Asian countries. Pest abuse can lead to mould damage.

Using special storage for vital records normally costs quite a bit more and again will vary, depending on the size of the archive company. Sometimes the special storage provided by the smaller companies has no protection against fire, such as a vault, fire-proof safes or a fire suppression system such as Halon gas extinguishers, which means that records can still be damaged.

European legislation banned the use of Halon gas extinguishers on 31 December 2002, because of its harmful CFC content. Other fire suppression alternatives are available, which range from other types of gases, water based systems, film forming foam and dry powder.

In Singapore, the records management companies provide top-level air-conditioned, fire-proof storage services for storing vital records, although the facilities are more basic for normal storage.

In Thailand, normal archive storage provision does not cover providing air-conditioning in the warehouse. Special storage for vital records and electronic back-up records would be maintained in air-conditioned warehousing, with 24-hour guards on-site. The premises may also have infrared smoke-heat detectors and be connected to a fire suppression system.

External Assistance

If loss of offices occurs, other options to consider planning ahead for would be to locate resources for loan or replacement in another format. Places to check are:

- Public Libraries - most offer corporate subscriptions

- Law Libraries

- Other libraries on the Internet such as educational libraries who may be willing to enter into an agreement for document supply / information assistance under certain circumstances. This would be a good way for under-funded libraries to earn some extra funds

- Government Bodies

- Regulatory Bodies

- Subject Specific Organisational Bodies - Internet Portals

- Bookshops

- Publishers

- Full-text database content

- Subscriptions on CD-ROM

- Other companies in similar industries who may be willing to reciprocate library resources in the event of a disaster.

First Steps to Recovery

Every company is different and will have different requirements, but it could be relatively easy to provide at least a partial LIS service remotely. Most of the larger companies would be geared to providing remote access to the internal networks because they have a global intranet. There will therefore be data replication back-ups in more than one location, allowing faster access to internal systems.

Retaining a list of all service providers and login/password details at home would make it possible to conduct research from any laptop or internet-linked PC.

Other companies may be willing to share their libraries or offices and give access to a computer and a telephone, although just about every professional in Asia carries a mobile phone and a large number of people own Blackberry mobile email devices.

It may take a while to accumulate another collection, especially if the collection comes from global resources, but the bookshops, publishers and vendors will be able to respond faster to the replacement process if the library professionals utilise corporate accounts and credit cards. Some of the larger bookshops have local warehouses that store copies of the latest business titles from the big business publishers.

Just as office building management carries out regular fire/alarm drills, it would be a waste of time, planning and effort to create and implement a business continuity procedure and then not test it out on a regular basis. The entire procedure should be tested once a year for the whole organisation and be updated as and when necessary to reflect new internal systems.

These ideas may assist in an organisation's LIS recovery services. However, there are more detailed studies <http://preserve.harvard.edu/emergencies/recovery.html> for those who wish to undertake such a project, than I have space for in this article.

Interesting reading:

A Model Plan for Libraries and Information Centres University of California at San Diego <orpheus.ucsd.edu/preservation/index.html>

Michigan State University Library Disaster Manual <http://www.lib.msu.edu/apd/Disaster_Man_Lib.htm>

IT Papers.com - Disaster Recovery White Papers http://www.asiacomputerweekly.com/acw_viewcat.cfm?select=43&startrow=1>

Asian Disaster Management News <http://www.adpc.ait.ac.th/infores/newsletter/2003/01-03/default.html>