

In This Issue

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1 Editorial

2 My Favourite Tipples

from Duncan Parry

2 Free Pint Regulars

3 Free Pint Bar

In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company
Reviewed by Simon Coltery

4 Jobs

Information Centre Manager
Information Manager
Researcher

5 Bookshelf

"Capitalizing on Knowledge:
from E-Business to K-Business "
Written by David J. Skyrme
Reviewed by Ana Neves

6 Tips Article

"Digital Content on the Web "
By Sam Vaknin

7 Feature Article

"Untangling The Web For Health
Professionals "
By Alison Turner

Fact, Events and Gold

Forthcoming Articles

4 Contact Information

Editorial

We've checked this morning's post, but the special letter isn't there. We're eagerly awaiting a telegram from The Queen since it's Free Pint's 100th edition today. Like The Queen, Free Pint enjoys two birthdays, and so is also celebrating its fourth birthday since it was first published in November 1997.

A lot has happened at Free Pint since its conception in a London park whilst lounging between meetings. Over 40,000 people from 181 countries have signed up to receive each issue, and the Free Pint Web site is now welcoming over 2,500 visitors every day.

The Free Pint Bar
<<http://www.freepint.com/bar>> has also proven extremely popular with over 12,000 questions and answers and 6,000 people receiving the Bar Digest three times a week.

We've invested a tremendous amount of time and money into Free Pint, and from the many letters of support we receive it seems we're offering a useful service. So, please join us in raising your glasses to many more Free Pints.

We have a press release and photo about our birthday and recent innovations. If you can give us some publicity, or know someone who can, then please visit
<<http://www.freepint.com/press.htm>>.

In today's birthday edition we have articles on resources for digital publishing, health information and a review of a book about Knowledge Management and eBusinesses. Of course, we also round up the latest hot topics at the Bar.

Thank you for your support of Free Pint over the years, especially in helping us spread the word. You know, over 80% of new subscribers have joined through word-of-mouth recommendation.
Best regards
William Hann
Founder and Managing Editor

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ONLINE VERSION WITH ACTIVATED HYPERLINKS

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.htm>>

ADOBE ACROBAT VERSION WITH NEWSLETTER FORMATTING

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.pdf>>

About Free Pint

Free Pint is an online community of information researchers. Members receive this free newsletter every two weeks 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 the substantial archive of articles, book reviews, jobs, industry news & events, with answers to your research questions and networking at the Free Pint Bars. Free Pint Regulars (paid-up members) also receive a weekly current awareness newsletter, discounts and publicity. Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out.

To receive the Adobe Acrobat version as an attachment or a brief notification it's online, visit
<<http://www.freepint.com/subs>>.

Online Information 2001:

Worldwide answers to your information needs

4-6 December 2001, Olympia Grand Hall, London, UK
<http://www.online-information.co.uk>

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[li1001]

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If you're interested in ONE MILLION exposures then view our advertising brochure at
<<http://www.freepint.com/advert.htm>>

Free Pint Regulars

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

[Note: This section is primarily aimed at Regulars, paid members of the Free Pint community. Regulars receive the weekly "Pub Crawl" current awareness newsletter, discounts and publicity. The Pub Crawl archive is available at <http://www.freepint.com/regular>]

We really are grateful to all our Regulars for their support, and it's nice to welcome new Regulars regularly. Here at Free Pint we can see the benefit of your support, but it's great to know you get a lot out of your membership too.

For instance, we had a note from a Regular the other day about the weekly Pub Crawl. All he said was "Excellent bulletin - thanks" but that really did give us a tremendous boost.

Therefore, if you have any feedback, thoughts or suggestions about your Regular membership then do email me.

William Hann, Managing Editor
william@freepint.com

[If you are not currently a Free Pint Regular and would like to find out more about the benefits of membership, then please visit the Regular homepage at <http://www.freepint.com/regular>. Regular membership is just 60 pounds per year (US\$85, AUS\$169 or 97 Euros).]

My Favourite Tipples from Duncan Parry

- **First Monday**
<<http://www.firstmonday.dk/>> - Peer reviewed research articles on topics including search navigation, e-mail and e-commerce.
- **EuropeMedia**
<<http://www.EuropeMedia.Net>> - New media news and event calendar arranged by European country.
- **Blogger**
<<http://www.blogger.com>> - Publish your own weblog for free - or use it to update the news pages of your site.
- **BBC World**
<<http://www.bbcworld.com/>> - Watch BBC World Online - requires Quicktime.
- **WebAttack**
<<http://www.webattack.com/>> - Looking for a software utility? Webattack is one of the best software collections of freeware and shareware - well designed with good descriptions of each program.

Duncan Parry is a directory editor for Lycos UK, responsible for Computers, Technology, Internet and Telecommunications. <http://www.lycos.co.uk/>. He also provides freelance site design, promotion and writing services

<<http://www.digitalstrike.co.uk>>.

Tell us about your top five favourite Web sites. See the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm> > and email simon@freepint.com.

Want to Write for Free Pint?

If you'd like to contribute an article, review or tipples to Free Pint, then please see the invitation at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>

Free Pint Fact

Since our mention in the last edition offering free Free Pint beer mats, we have spent much of the last two weeks posting out thousands of mats all over the world.

As well as being sent around the UK, Europe and North America, destinations have also included Ghana South Africa and Australia.

If you've missed the offer and would like to receive some beer mats, either for yourself or to share with colleagues, then see the announcement at the Bar <http://www.freepint.com/go/b13679>.

Free Pint Gold

This time last year we looked at how the Internet is affecting the music industry, and had an unmissable article with business information resources for SMEs

* Free Pint No.75, 16th November 2000 "Music and the Internet Revolution" and "Business Information for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises".
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/161100.htm>>

In Free Pint two years ago there was a URL-packed article on the water industry and one on exploiting electronic communities.

* Free Pint No.50, 18th November 1999 "Information on tap - Web resources on the water industry" and "Electronic Communities".
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/18119.htm>>

Three years ago, Free Pint's Managing Editor edited a tip-packed article on promoting your Web site on little or no budget. Meanwhile, Phil Bradley argued that CD-Rom and Web technologies are complimentary rather than competing with each other.

* Free Pint No.26, 12th November 1998 "Web Site Promotion Ideas" and "CD-ROMs and the Web".
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/121198.htm>>

Four years ago, in the very first issue of Free Pint, we were invited to think about the basics of good searching. There was also a much-cited article on business information Web sources by Karen Blakeman.

* Free Pint No.1, 6th November 1997 "Back to Searching Basics" and "Major Sources of Business Information on the Internet".
• <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/061197.htm>>

5 December, 18.15-19.15 SARAH HARTLEY: Phyllis Pearsall and the London A-Z at the British Library. Frustrated at the lack of a decent street map of London, Phyllis Pearsall decided to do something about it. During a single year she covered most of London's 23,000 streets. To publish the atlas, in 1936, she set up The Geographers' A-Z Map Company - Sarah Hartley is the author of Mrs P's Journey (Simon & Schuster).
tel 020 7412 7332 or email boxoffice@bl.uk

[bl1002

**Free Pint Bar
In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company
Reviewed by Simon Collery**

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.htm#bar>>

Free Pint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>

[Note: To read a posting enter the message number in place of XXXXX in the address
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/bXXXXX>>]

With all the scams, viruses, hoaxes, spam and other time wasting activities on the Web, I was pleased to come across a portal to review that deals with the whole lot in the one place (13775). I even used it this morning to find out if there is any truth in stories about a seven octave singing range. People swear to having evidence one way or the other but I am still unable to refute or confirm the story. I hope it will be a good starting point for Free Pinters with similar queries (13554, 13720).

And the popular theme of the last two weeks has been resources, yet again. The Free Pint article on climate change elicited some postings about further sites on the subject (13686, 13698). There were also resources proffered on things like historical stocks (13651), historical daily share prices (13654), historical foreign exchange rates (13602), people-finding sites (13803) and European press releases (13606).

People were trying to find out about IT managers (13656), the FT Dynamo service (13852), lists of journals for electronic engineers (13876) and the UK's Daily Express archives (13878). And I reviewed a reference tool for anyone interested in phrases (13588) and a whole host of resources for people interested in Enterprise Information Portals, otherwise known as EIPs (13922).

Punters have also been researching knowledge audits (13810), US transport consultants (13759), identity theft (13564), glycol detection (13616), iodine oxidation (13618), pressure vessel codes (13780), latitude and longitude coordinates (13904, 13896), the specialist dietary food industry (13622) and sources of economic policy information for America, Brazil, China, Poland and South Africa (13918).

Business researchers have been concerning themselves with European media statistics (13655), the digital TV industry in Germany (13717), statistical sampling (13783), UK broadband market forecasts (13800), Korean company information (13820), German company information (13805), working hours and employment rights (13704, 13829, 13714), solicitors qualified to practice in Ireland, England and Wales (13551) and customer relationship management, or CRM (13831).

Not content with the above, others have been asking about various kinds of organisation that lend money (13662), journals and magazines about taxation (13751), information on individual fund management firms (13807), contact information for public sector purchasing staff (13857), market intelligence gathering (13873), getting business grants under difficult personal circumstances (13886) and outsourcing information research to India (13771).

There have been techie questions about developing academic Web pages (13874), MS Word 8 (13823), home ADSL access (13815), selling second-hand software licences (13816), anti-virus software (13795), Windows 95 (13746), sharing a printer (13755), SharePoint software (13621), bank interest charge software (13627), XML and intranets (13578), system performance (13533), help with changing from Macs to Windows (13536) and finding out traffic figures for someone else's site using DNS log information (13914).

Finally, there have been miscellaneous questions about childcare facilities in Brussels (13772), facilities for handicapped people in France (13685), starting a small, specialist library in Greece (13697), getting removed from junk mail lists (13912), the meaning of *sic* (13659), choosing a digital camera (13548), manufacturing drum kits (13684), locating a Thomas Hardy poem (13789) and establishing the authorship of "The Man Who Wasn't There" (13855).

Free Pint Student Bar

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

[Note: To read a posting enter the message number in place of XXXX in the address
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/sXXXX>>]

Students have been researching land reform in Namibia (1963), finding thesis manuscripts (1978) and courses and books on C++ (1973). They've also been enquiring about living in Edinburgh (1951), finding a Web designer in Staffordshire (1961) and the future of Altavista (1965). And I've added some recently published information on MBAs and university rankings as that seems to be popular in the Student Bar (1962).

Simon Collery, Content Developer <simon@freepint.com>

If you have a tricky research question or can help other Free Pinters then do post a message at the Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>> or the Student Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/student>>.

To have the latest Bar postings sent to you every other day, log in to your account online or send a blank email to <digest@freepint.com>. For the Student Bar Digest contact <studentdigest@freepint.com>.

**New: Brochure for
"Regular" Membership**

If you're considering becoming a Free Pint Regular (paid-up member) then view the sign-up summary form in Adobe Acrobat format.

It's quick to print out and summarises the main benefits:
<<http://www.freepint.com/regular>>

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

[fa1003]

Free Pint Jobs<<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>

Free Pint Jobs has details of many information-related vacancies. Whether you're searching for a new job or have a position to fill then you should be using Free Pint Jobs.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Information Centre Manager<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1457>>

Manage small team to provide a research service and rise to the challenge of developing existing Intranet services at a Bristol firm.

Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment and Services Limited

Information Manager<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1449>>

Managing Senior Researchers, developing strategy, high level promotion of services and advanced in-depth research.

Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Researcher<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1472>>

Exciting opportunity to provide synthesis & interpretation of branding & media analysis data for international media company.

Recruiter: Recruit Media Limited

[The above jobs are paid listings]

Candidates: It is free to search Free Pint Jobs and you can set up a profile to be notified weekly by email of relevant new vacancies.

Advertisers: List your vacancies and receive significant publicity. Recruitment agencies can also automatically upload all their jobs.

**Research a UK Company Or Company
Director For Free**

Free Pint has recently added detailed reports on company Directors to its UK company research service. It's free to search and buy reports as needed, without setup or subscription fees.

<<http://www.freepint.com/icc>>**Events**<<http://www.freepint.com/events>>

This week's forthcoming events are all in the UK. In London, HarperKay are running "Making Profits from Digital Publishing" which will look at controlling operational costs in this time of diminishing advertising revenues.

In Derby there is "KnowHow - e-Learning" from the UK Authorware User Group in association with The University of Derby, which "... seeks to be the definitive national conference for e-Learning and the use of Macromedia Authorware".

In Liverpool, Van Dusseldorp & Partners are running a "Digital Content Europe Seminar" on "Winning strategies for online entertainment". It is billed as a "... one-day event exploring the main issues concerning the production, syndication and sales of online entertainment"

If you're running an event and want to give out some Free Pint beer mats as freebies then let us know your address and number required.

Details of these and many other conferences and exhibitions in the information industry can be found on the Free Pint Events page
<<http://www.freepint.com/events>>.

Submit details of your event for free promotion, and keep us informed about any changes to current listings.

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Free Pint Bookshelf<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>**"Capitalizing on Knowledge: from E-Business to K-Business"**Written by **David J. Skyrme**Reviewed by **Ana Neves**

Knowledge management and e-business: the first uses knowledge to pursue business benefits, while the other uses the Internet to sell products or services. In this book, Skyrme draws a scenario where organisations' knowledge can also be used to increase revenue through its e-commercialisation. This is what he calls k-business.

The first chapter delves into the knowledge management concepts. It presents some case studies, suggests the critical factors for the success of a KM initiative, and indicates some activities for each one of the KM stages. Knowledge inside-out (share internal knowledge with clients and partners) and outside-in (gathering knowledge from clients to use inside) lead us to the end of the chapter. Its strongest message is that although you can use your organisation's knowledge to create extra revenue you still need a knowledge management initiative.

E-business, is the subject of the second chapter. Compiling some thoughts from the huge amount of existing literature, it offers a quick summary of its history, its problems and evolution, and lists the five Internet offers e-commerce can explore: connections, communications, content, communities, and commerce. The chapter finishes off with an overview of dot.com companies, including some of the reasons for failure and the keys to success.

The third chapter brings knowledge management and e-business together into k-business, the online knowledge business. There are two early strategic decisions to make when considering k-business: the role to play in the knowledge trading space, and the most appropriate online business model. To help on the first decision, Skyrme offers a list of the possible opportunities within the k-business market: k-creator, k-mediary, k-aggregator, k-portal, k-

refiner, k-packager, k-broker, k-publisher, k-shop, k-community, k-processor, k-franchiser, and k- anything. The author then suggests a gradual progression from free to fee, and analyses knowledge markets and knowledge products.

After revisiting marketing principles, Skyrme goes over the 10 Ps of Internet marketing: positioning, packaging, portals, pathways, pages, personalization, progression, payments, processes, and performance.

Chapter eight analyses the seven success factors of k-business. These are represented by the acronym kbiz.com, and are: knowledge assets, business concepts, incubation, z-factor, customer experience, operational excellence, and momentum.

A special reference to the last chapter where Skyrme discusses a series of relevant issues and dilemmas. These are certainly food for thought!

The book is very well structured although, sometimes, the author repeats himself. At the end of each chapter, Skyrme offers some "points to ponder" based on the content presented.

Overall, I consider "Capitalizing on Knowledge" very good. It provides good ideas to those thinking about a k-business or to the k-rich individuals who hadn't yet considered the possibility of selling their knowledge to also become... m-rich (money rich)!

Ana Neves is Change Manager at the Abbey National Group and the editor of portal KMOL <http://www.kmol.online.pt> a Web site dedicated to Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning. Mainly directed towards the

Portuguese language community, portal KMOL also offers a wide range of content in English <http://www.kmol.online.pt/ajuda/english.html>. There you can find articles, book and article reviews, interviews, and much more.

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- "Capitalizing on Knowledge: from E-Business to K-Business" ISBN 0750650117 published by Butterworth-Heinemann and written by David J. Skyrme
- Search for and purchase any book from Amazon via the Free Pint Bookshelf at <http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>
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[lc1004]

Tips Article

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.htm#tips>>

"Digital Content on the Web"
By Sam Vaknin

There are hundreds of premium quality Web sites concerned with print books, e-books, publishing, and e-publishing. As with every new technology and every new medium, no one is quite sure what to make of it. Fads, fashions, and "trends" supersede each other with dizzying speed. The Web abounds with relics of each and every phase in the conceptual development of the Internet as a content delivery vehicle.

Moreover, the insuperable distinction that existed in the past between types of content - films, books, audio, etc. - has dissolved into the digital ocean of multimedia bits and bytes. All types of content can now be delivered identically, using the same technologies. A great resource for tracking this shifting landscape is M.J. Rose's column about e-books and e-publishing in Wired <<http://www.wired.com>>.

Despite this - often disorientating - cornucopia, there are very few authoritative aggregators of knowledge, analyses, and information about the emerging industry known as "e-publishing" and the emerging medium known as the Web.

The most academically inclined of them all is the thorough, deep, farsighted, well researched Seybold Reports <<http://www.seyboldreports.com/>>.

The Web site includes the full text of numerous professional, in-depth, reports about publishing technologies, e-publishing, and e-books.

Another scholarly monitor of content on the Web - though with an agenda to render all content free to consumers - is "The Free Online Scholarship Newsletter" <<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/index.htm>>.

It is a veritable treasure trove of links and resources regarding scholarly publishing, digital rights management, trends in content dissemination - and the economic and moral issues these new technologies keep raising. The site contains the newsletter archive, the discussion forum, and user submitted links.

One of the most comprehensive Web sites about e-publishing and e-books is eBookWeb <<http://www.ebookweb.org/>>.

It includes an almost daily feed of news, views, columns, analyses, forecasting, announcements, press releases, technological breakthroughs, opinions, discussion forums - a real party. It offers other Web sites its news feed which comprises dozens of weekly breaking stories and analytic pieces.

The rich archives of another, similar Web site - InternetContent.net <<http://www.internetcontent.net/>> are still available on line, though InternetContent.net itself has ceased publication.

Digital Content at WritersWrite <<http://www.writerswrite.com/epublishing/digitalcontent.htm>> similarly offers information and resources regarding digital content in various formats and options: electronic ink, PDF, PDAs, Web publishing, wireless content.

Foreword - The Magazine of Independent Publishing

<<http://www.forewordmagazine.com/>> is a veteran and venerable resource. Everything you wanted to know about e-publishing, e-content, digital distribution, digital rights management, conferences and payment systems.

Another great magazine is eContent Magazine <<http://www.econtentmag.com/>>. It contains digital content strategies and resources magazines, conferences, and news.

The rich Information Highways Web site <<http://www.informationhighways.net/>> contains the Information Highways Magazine, HotBytes Newsletter, the e-Content Institute and the Canadian e-Content Awards.

Some conference Web sites are more than mere brochures. Content.net <<http://www.content.net/>>, the official Web site of the Content World 2001 Conference contains a wealth of material regarding e-publishing.

Content Wire <<http://www.content-wire.com/Home/Index.cfm>> expands the scope of investigation of digital content to include images and sound. It concentrates on news and provides a much needed glossary and other resources regarding all manner of digital content.

Digital Producer Magazine <<http://www.digitalproducer.com/>> has a narrower focus. It is dedicated to video and multimedia content creation and distribution. The advent of broadband connections (DSL, ADSL, Satellites) has made the home delivery of films, video clips, and music a reality. This led to major realignments in the music recording industry and is likely to do the same to film studios.

Finally, there is my humble Web site - TrendSitters - Digital Content and Web Technologies <<http://www.trendsitters.com>>. It contains essays dedicated to the new media, doing business on the web, digital content, its creation and distribution, e-publishing, e-books, digital reference, DRM technology, and other related issues. There are also links and recommended literature.

Sam Vaknin <<http://samvak.tripod.com>> is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and eBookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

Related Free Pint links:

- "Webmaster" articles and resources in the Free Pint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p183>>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.htm#tips>>
- Post a message to the author, Sam Vaknin, or suggest further resources, at the Free Pint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>

Feature Article

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151101.htm#feature>>

"Untangling The Web For Health Professionals"
By Alison Turner

"National Library Week is a great time to remind people about the value of a free library card," says Mrs. Bush, a former librarian. "Libraries are community treasure chests, loaded with a wealth of information available to everyone, equally, and the key to that treasure chest is a library card." See The First Lady of the USA, launching the American Library Association's 2001 campaign <<https://cs.ala.org/@yourlibrary/launch2001.cfm>>.

Having an ex-librarian as spouse of your country's Top Person is serendipity. However, making sure that she says what you want, when you want, in front of the right people, could be counted as good marketing. Increasingly, librarians have become aware that marketing is not just about selling, and have become more interested in using marketing to provide better services. This article pinpoints a few general marketing resources and then describes resources specific to library and information sectors. The emphasis is on free stuff.

General Resources

Any health professional using the Internet needs a basic toolkit of resources. This includes the type of reference materials you may see on a library shelf, such as dictionaries, directories and official sources. Certainly, most NHS librarians wouldn't be without access to a medical dictionary, to check those awkward spellings! One of the more useful sources on the Web is xrefer <<http://www.xrefer.com>>, whilst more general tools are available such as Research-it <<http://www.itools.com/research-it>>.

Finding people and organisations is equally important; directories are a particularly well-thumbed resource in most libraries and the Internet is an ideal medium for providing this type of information. Recently, the General Medical Council made available their register of doctors online <<http://www.gmc-uk.org>> to enable members of the public to search for physicians. Finding organisations within the NHS has also become much easier following the launch of an official gateway to NHS organisations <<http://www.nhs.uk>> providing a search facility to find local services, such as hospitals, GPs and dentists.

Statistics are another regular on the reference shelves and the National Statistics site <<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>> will be familiar to many readers, providing a whole range of useful figures. The Finding Health Statistics site <<http://www.ihs.ox.ac.uk/library/statistics/homepage.htm>> delivers an overview of sources particularly relevant to medicine and healthcare.

And for anything else which might be needed, there are numerous search engines which a health professional can call on <http://searchenginewatch.com/links/Specialty_Search_Engines/Medical_Search_Engines/index.html> although the favourite among many of my colleagues remains Google <<http://www.google.co.uk>>.

Supporting Patient Care

Health care within the UK is undergoing massive change, some of the most notable changes as a result of the NHS Plan, published in 2000 <<http://www.nhs.uk/nationalplan/>>. A move towards evidence-based practice and the explosion

of information from research has meant that health professionals have to be even more selective when choosing information resources.

A project is underway within the NHS to provide a web-based information resource, to filter the information and to present the higher quality resources <<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk>> thus providing easy and rapid access to information. Readers may already be familiar with the NHS Direct Online <<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>> Web site specifically aimed at patients and the public. The move towards evidence-based practice within the health service has resulted in a plethora of new value-added databases, publications and Web sites, which select and synthesise the better quality research studies.

Whilst it is true that these sources do in fact save health professionals time, it can be difficult just to keep track of the information sources let alone the current research! One very popular solution is the TRIP Database <<http://www.tripdatabase.com>> which offers a one-stop search of over 70 key resources, via a simple interface. There isn't the time or the space to cover the range of resources potentially useful to your average health professional, but some of the more general sources are covered here. More specific resources cover particular aspects of patient care, such as prescribing and BIOME <<http://biome.ac.uk/>> is the best gateway to find these.

Research

As well as consulting the latest research with a view to providing the best possible patient care, health professionals are often involved in conducting their own research projects, from small scale dissertations through to multinational clinical trials. A number of established databases, such as Medline and Embase, are available through local library services and this range is complemented by the vast amount of information now accessible without charge over the Internet.

A popular source is Pubmed <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi>>, from the National Library of Medicine in the United States, which incorporates the Medline database, including references to recently published articles. The National Institutes of Health <<http://www.nih.gov/>> as a whole have been publishing information on the Web for some time and offer a range of useful databases, covering such diverse topics as toxicology, history of medicine and health services administration. Within the overall scientific community, a debate is raging over the publication of research with many advocating open archiving approaches. There is some progress towards this idea and two leading services are Pubmed Central <<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/>> and Biomed Central <<http://www.biomedcentral.com/>>.

Keeping Up To Date

The vast majority of health professionals are undertaking

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continuing education or professional development programmes of one sort or another. Doctors, in particular, follow a defined route throughout their careers and many sources have been established to support their information needs. One of the most popular health sites in the UK is Doctors.net.UK <<http://www.doctors.net.uk/>> which is a peer-led resource for doctors and medical students, incorporating discussion lists, database access and study topics. The Royal Colleges and professional bodies such as the British Medical Association all have web sites, which can be located via OMNI <<http://omni.ac.uk/>>. Nursing and allied health professionals, of course, have their own professional associations and bodies, often linked to their continuing professional development, which can be located via NMAP <<http://nmap.ac.uk/>>.

Other than checking in regularly at such Web sites, it can be difficult for health professionals to find the time to keep up to date with professional issues, new research and other important news. Several publishers are now taking advantage of the huge potential of the Internet and offering electronic updating services. The BMJ <<http://www.bmj.com/>> for example, offers readers the chance to register (free of charge) for email alerts listing the contents of the latest issue. For those health professionals who don't themselves subscribe, or who are based at some distance from their local library, this offers an ideal opportunity to stay ahead of the game.

A very useful service is Pubcrawler <<http://www.pubcrawler.ie/>> which is linked to PubMed and offers the ability to set up search profiles and email alerts. Your search is run regularly and any hits emailed to you instantly. And last but certainly not least, the "invisible college" plays a role – health professionals consult colleagues on a regular basis and the electronic environment has nurtured rather than supplanted this spirit of co-operation. As with other professions, a host of mailing lists and discussion forums have sprouted over recent years, many of which are hosted by a service such as JISCMail <<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/>> or Doctors.Net.UK.

Management and Health Policy

Many health professionals now have managerial roles and as such, need to keep up to date with health policy and other relevant information. Health service managers have specific information needs and many sources have developed as a result. The Department of Health Web site <<http://www.doh.gov.uk/>> is an obvious source for the latest in health policy and provides full text access to a range of documentation, with links to appropriate web pages.

Since "The New NHS" was published by the Government in 1997, two major new organisations have emerged, and have well-developed web sites to disseminate their publications – the National Institute for Clinical Excellence <<http://www.nice.org.uk/>> and the Commission for Health Improvement <<http://www.chi.nhs.uk/>>. A valuable resource is the Health reports page <<http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/lea/info/health/heareps.htm>> which lists health related reports and inquiries. As the focus on the interface between health and social care increases, health professionals increasingly need access to information relating to social care and social services. For this they need look no further than the electronic Library for Social Care <<http://www.elsc.org.uk/>> which points to major policy documents and key resources.

The quality of information is important to any professional but within the healthcare domain, it is crucial that health professionals can rely on the accuracy and currency of an information resource. The resources mentioned here are some basic pointers to useful Web sites but to explore further, health professionals need to proceed with caution.

But all is not doom and gloom ... The BIOME service is leading the field in quality health information within the UK. Produced by BIOME, OMNI and NMAP are databases of accredited health information resources on the Internet; all resources are checked against a quality checklist before being considered for inclusion and only those resources deemed to be of sufficient quality make the grade. So rather than search the Web and then try to determine the quality, it's much easier and quicker to let OMNI and NMAP do the job for you.

So what's out there for health professionals? The answer is probably too much information! But by maintaining a toolkit of a dozen or so resources, the average health professional can navigate the web relatively quickly and easily without becoming lost or entangled.

Alison Turner is Knowledge Manager, National electronic Library for Health, NHS Information Authority. Alison joined the National electronic Library for Health <<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/>> earlier this year, having previously managed the library service at Gloucestershire Royal NHS Trust. Alison has worked in the field of health information for seven years. Her current role involves drawing together quality- assured content specifically for health professionals. The overall aim of the National electronic Library for Health is to make information about effectiveness of care readily available to NHS staff, using Internet and associated technologies.

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