Free Pint®

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<http://www.freepint.com/
issues/160502.htm>

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issues/160502.pdf>

Editorial

Talk to anyone about pay and they're sure to have an opinion. However, such conversations often quickly change to one of status, quality of life, job security, benefits, etc. These are often of equal or greater importance to the basic salary someone receives.

This shift in focus is what happened at the Bar in response to my last Editorial about remuneration for information professionals <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17417>. It started out with tales of low pay and redundancy, and calls to associations and publications to reject low-paid job vacancy advertising; how IT and Marketing departments have hijacked the intranet; how globalisation and deregulation have caused localised corporate information centres to close; that there is a widespread misconception that employees should be able to get their own data from the Web for free.

However, the counter-responses soon arrived from those with different outlooks. Respondents highlighted the importance of marketing our skills and services, and learning to blow our own trumpets. We must be able to measure and demonstrate the value of the service we provide. Poster Diana Nutting added, "You can make your own status by making yourself indispensable to the decision makers".

Links to relevant resources were added to the discussion, such as Amelia Kassel's recent article "Practical Tips to Help You Prove Your Value" <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17593>. Amelia has also spoken to a number of utility librarians who have reinvented themselves as competitive intelligence or market research specialists or analysts, and who are enjoying increased status. The 'marketing/value movement' inevitably gives way to opportunities for increased remuneration.

A different view was that perhaps we should all be going freelance to market ourselves as contractors, and maybe there's a need for an association to support freelance information professionals. Alternatively, Free Pinters suggested there should be a press campaign to publicise how the information professional's role is changing, such as how we've taken on the role of trainer and mentor.

Throughout the discussion there was a general acceptance that a job is no longer for life. Indeed, my colleague Simon stuck his neck out in last week's Pub Crawl by saying that whenever he's tried to explain knowledge management to people, they've seen it as a way for employers to "debrief employees before ejecting them from the organisation". There have already been responses to this at the Bar, but what do you think? Does KM have a bearing on remuneration, and how is it perceived within organisations? Post your responses to Simon's comments at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17672> .

Thank you to everyone who posted to the Bar about remuneration. It has been a very interesting topic, and I have been informed off-list that a number of people and organisations are going to try to address some of the issues raised. If you wouldd like to read all the postings, then visit <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17417>.

A message we picked up from the discussion was that although Free Pint is good at getting people together online, it should be doing more to help people meet face-to-face. Hear, hear. The planning has come to fruition with our 'Content Management Exchange' in June at the Free Pint offices in West London. The afternoon event is about managing and implementing a content management system, and is co-sponsored by Intranet Focus <http://www.freepint.com/exchange/cm240602.htm>.

I really hope you enjoy today's Free Pint, and get a lot out of it and the discussions at the Bar. All we ask is that you help us to spread the word to your colleagues and friends, possibly by forwarding this issue to them.

Best regards
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Content Management Exchange - West London

<http://www.freepint.com/
exchange/cm240602.htm>

This seminar in June will focus on the management and operational issues of choosing and implementing content management software (CMS).

Attendees will receive a CMS checklist and implementation briefing paper. The speaker is Martin White, and the event is co-sponsored by Free Pint and Intranet Focus. Reserve your place today.

My Favourite Tipples from Simon White

- <http://www.bowest.com.au/library.html> - The essential theories and formulae that keep the world of electrical engineering on track

- <http://www.ex.ac.uk/cimt/dictunit/dictunit.htm> - A page covering every measurement conversion factor any budding engineer, student or DIY enthusiast could ever need.

- <http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/realdata/sightings/index.html> - A surprisingly interesting site from NASA which will identify the position of spacecraft in the night sky depending on your location.

- <http://www.theregister.co.uk/> - News and analysis covering the entire IT sector, interspersed with more light hearted stories. Definitely more entertaining than your average news site.

- <http://www.movie-mistakes.com/> - The ultimate resource for the cynical movie watcher. A comprehensive list of the errors which should have never made it out of the editing room.

Simon is an engineering student at Selwyn College, Cambridge <http://www.sel.cam.ac.uk>. His (rare) free time is consumed by films, music and a sideline in website design.

Email your top five favourite Web sites to <simon@freepint.com> or see the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>.

Free Pint Gold

This time last year we looked at how the Internet is affecting UK politics. There was also a good rundown of interesting sites for information professionals, the list thankfully including Free Pint.

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

Since we recently covered International Law, it's good that two years ago we also looked at employment law, since it affects every working person. It was good too, to find out the importance of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

- Free Pint 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>

Whenever we run articles on researching patents, we always get a raft of positive feedback. This was true of the Tips article in 1999, and of the other resources in the "Intellectual Property" section of the Free Pint Portal <http://www.freepint.com/go/p143>.

- Free Pint 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>

Four years ago we demonstrated the power of digital publishing by reviewing the Internet World show before the three days were even over. This was accompanied by a fascinating look at how deafblind people use computers and the Web.

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

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 Bar. Pay to upgrade your membership and also receive the weekly Free Pint Pub Crawl current awareness newsletter.

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

Free Pint Bar
In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company
Reviewed by Simon Collery
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/160502.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>]

It has been claimed that the promise of lifelong employment that employers used to give to employees has been replaced by a promise of lifelong learning. It is further claimed that the use of Knowledge Management (KM) tools and techniques is a part of this lifelong learning and that it is for the mutual benefit of employer and employee (17671).

Someone has defended these employers and their use of KM. But I still don't see how employees whose jobs have been outsourced, whose companies have downsized or whose employment status has effectively been casualised, can benefit from company databases, intranets and training programmes.

If you do wish to share your knowledge you can do so, and get paid for it, with Google Answers (17504). But if you are interested in swapping your knowledge for other people's knowledge, you can get free answers in the Free Pint Bar. We'd be especially pleased to hear from people who know about broadband content in the South West of England (17514), developing library databases (17579), risk management (17506), setting up an online consultancy (17695) and rental property in Tenerife (17526).

Whether you want to read what's been said or add your contribution, there were also queries about posting copyrighted material in public forums (17586), marketing design services (17632), researching journals (17418), steel and glass suppliers for civil construction projects (17497), information auditing (17603), watermarking software for audio-visual material (17554) and the benefits of spam (17653).

Queries about attitudes to risk (17517), numbers of doctors by country (17680) and rankings of institutional investors (17551) have been answered but there are some unanswered postings about clothing markets in Greece (17606), industrial production in the UK (17446), offline gambling in Europe (17500) and the percentage of costs that should be allocated for Web development (17678).

Resources recommended in the last two weeks cover publishing best sellers (17596), digital library suppliers (17607), women working in offshore oil and gas jobs (17647), European drowning statistics (17464) and international law (17694). And I reviewed a useful language reference site

(17441), a technical help site (17683) and some international business directories (17569).

Most techie questions have been answered but there are some outstanding ones about add-ons for Sage software (17533), Google redirect scripts (17525) and submitting your site to search engines (17693). Others were about database solutions (17589), URL redirection (17414), software for recording download volumes (17578), on-site search tools (17485), Win2k automatically dialling the ISP (17443), achieving high search engine rankings (17565) and the BBC's search engine (17664).

Miscellaneous queries have been about getting your art into galleries (17476), UK based occupational health and fitness newsletters (17690), using mobile phones abroad (17493) and remuneration for information professionals (17417), a very popular thread!

Finally, after a constant barrage of requests for Latin translations for over a year (17412, 17511, 17535), we've decided to call a halt to them and delete any new ones that appear (17605). They are not the concern of the Free Pint Bar and they are particularly annoying to subscribers to the Bar Digest.

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 information auditing (2484), online brand name creation (2485), the changing role of law librarians (2486), a suitable title for a marketing dissertation (2501) and details of the structural defects in a building called Fallingwater (2492).

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 at <http://www.freepint.com/member>.

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

As well as the selected listings below, check out the weekly Bar postings which list the latest additions to Free Pint Jobs. This week's can be found at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17689> and last week's at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b17567>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Manager Full Time or Part-Time
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1789>
Major blue chip company, provide learning resources, senior role, team management responsibility, input to learning strategy and KM project
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

Corporate Finance Information Officer
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1799>
To provide research and training for prestigious Law Practice. To 25,000 pounds plus paid overtime.
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Information Assistant
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1801>
Supporting the work of the information and enquiries service.
Recruiter: ASH (Action on Smoking & Health) Scotland

Also, find out about the Information Specialist role at Syngenta in Bracknell, UK, <http://www.freepint.com/go/j1786>.

[The above jobs are paid listings]

Free Pint Jobs is THE place for information-related vacancies. Whether you're job searching or have a position to fill, you should be using Free Pint Jobs.

Candidates: It is free to search the database and you can set up a profile to be notified weekly by email of relevant new vacancies. <http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

Advertisers: List your vacancies and receive significant publicity. Match your job against the 500+ stored job seeker profiles. <http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

Virtual Acquisition Shelf and News Desk
<http://resourceshelf.freepint.com/>

"VAS&ND is an outstanding service for those who keep hunting for the latest ready reference products, services and news ..."
<http://www.gale.com/reference/peter/may.htm#virtual>

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

It all seems to be happening in the UK for the next month or so.

Free Pint and Intranet Focus are co-sponsoring a "Content Management Exchange" in June to look at the management and operational issues surrounding content management systems (CMS). The event will help with understanding what a CMS is and does, and how to set about selecting and implementing one <http://www.freepint.com/go/e138>.

The "Library + Information Show" from Resources Exhibitions is being held at the new ExCeL venue in London's Docklands. LiS showcases library and information products along with free talks from a range of speakers <http://www.freepint.com/go/e131>.

UKOLUG's biennial conference is being held in Birmingham, entitled "Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers: Exploiting the Online Environment". the keynote is from Bob McKee of the newly formed CILIP <http://www.freepint.com/go/e135>.

Also in Birmingham is the "e-biz summit" from the World Trade Group which will talk about eCommerce issues and products <http://www.freepint.com/go/e82>. Whilst back in London there is Infonortics' fifth annual "International Conference on Virtual Communities" <http://www.freepint.com/go/e109>.

Details of these and many other conferences in the information industry can be found on the Free Pint Events page <http://www.freepint.com/events>. Submit details of your event anywhere in the world for free promotion, and keep us informed of any changes to current listings.

Free Pint Bookshelf
<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>

"Small Business Websites that Work: Get Online to Grow Your Company"
Written by Sean McManus
Reviewed by Clive Hawkins

It is sometimes said that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. However, for a non-technical person to cope with setting up and developing an online business, no knowledge can be even worse! Many small business owners have taken the plunge online and relied on others to provide the 'know-how' with varying degrees of success. With so many pitfalls awaiting the unwary, creating a successful web business can be a daunting task. Books such as this one, however, can go some way to helping small business owners or managers in larger companies - whose skills lie in other areas - to avoid floundering in uncertainty and technical confusion when briefing suppliers.

There are many books that cover much of the same ground as Sean McManus', yet this one stands out from others I've read because firstly it's by an English author - often a novelty in this field - but also because it is easy to read, well organised and practical. There's a lot of information packed into just over 200 pages, but the book's clear design, the avoidance of technical jargon, and the liberal use of checklists and summaries make it a pleasure to read from start to finish, or to dip into a relevant section. There is also an accompanying website which includes updated information and web links <http://www.sbwtw.com/>.

Within 11 chapters all the main elements of putting a business online are covered, often in quite brief detail, but enough to highlight the key things to think about or be aware of. There's a particularly good chapter on how to

offer good customer service, plus useful sections on legal and ethical issues, as well as measuring the success of the website by using tracking software. The chapter on web design also takes an interesting angle by considering the pros and cons between doing it yourself, getting a friend to do it, outsourcing the work, or creating an in-house design team.

Several chapters deal with advertising and marketing. The use of affiliate schemes and advertising offers plenty of tips to help beginners avoid the many pitfalls that can lie in wait. The section on promoting the site includes a good overview of the role that search engines can play and, despite downplaying the importance of these tools for generating traffic, the six pages on the subject contain some solid advice.

This book provides a very good introduction to anyone who wants to have a clearer understanding of how to give an online business a better chance of success. Even those with some experience may benefit from dipping in to the book to read sections that cover an area new to them. Certainly, if you have no idea of the difference between a domain or a host, or are unsure about a virus e-mail compared to a viral one, this book will provide some much-needed enlightenment!

Clive Hawkins is an Internet marketing consultant who has been involved in the development and promotion of business websites since 1995. He set up and runs The Web Search Workshop <http://www.websearchworkshop.co.uk/>, which is a specialist consultancy offering a tailored search engine optimisation and

placement service on the web's most popular search tools. The company also offers in-house training support to help businesses improve their online marketing and to make the best use of search tools. Clive has also been a regular contributor to Practical Internet magazine, writing articles on marketing in their section for small businesses.

Related Free Pint links:

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

- Read customer comments and buy this book at Amazon.co.uk <http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0273654861/freepint0c>

- "Small Business Websites that Work: Get Online to Grow Your Company" ISBN 0273654861 published by Prentice Hall written by Sean McManus

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

- Read about other Internet marketing books on the Free Pint Bookshelf <http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/marketing.htm>

To propose an information-related book for review, send details to <bookshelf@freepint.com>.

Tips Article
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/160502.htm#tips>

"Video Games Industry Research"
By John Kirriemuir

First, a question. How many of the following have you heard of: Space Invaders, Pacman, Atari, ZX Spectrum, Nintendo, Tetris, Mario, Lara Croft, Playstation, Metal Gear Solid, Sega, Game Boy, Xbox, Halo, Jet Set Radio? Score 0-3 and much of this article may come as a surprise. Score 4-9, and you have probably been aware of mentions of video games in the press, but are not a player. 10-12 and you are, or have been, a video game player; 13-15 and you are probably reading this while taking a short break from your latest game.

The global computer and video game industry, generating revenue of over 20 billion US dollars a year, forms a major part of the entertainment industry. The sales of major games are counted in millions (and these are for software units that often cost 30 to 50 UK pounds each), meaning that total revenues often match or exceed cinema movie revenues. Game playing is widespread; surveys collated by organisations such as the Interactive Digital Software Association <http://www.idsa.com/releases/4-21-2000.html> indicate that up to 60 per cent of people in developed countries routinely play computer or video games, with an average player age in the mid to late twenties, and only a narrow majority being male. Add on those who play the occasional game of Solitaire or Minesweeper on the PC at work, and you are observing a phenomenon more common than buying a newspaper, owning a pet, or going on holiday abroad.

Why this popularity? Essentially, most people spend much of their time playing games of some kind or another. Make it through traffic lights before they turn red; catch the train or bus before it leaves. Can you complete the crossword, or answer the questions correctly on Who Wants To Be A Millionaire or The Weakest Link before the contestants? "Office politics" form a continuous, real-life strategy game which many people play (whether they want to or not), with player-definable goals such as "increase salary to next level", "become the boss", "score points off a rival colleague and beat them to that promotion" or "get a better job elsewhere". Gaming philosophers who frequent some of the many game-related online forums <http://www.futureforums.co.uk/edge/> periodically compare aspects of gaming to "real life" - with the key difference being that when "game over" is reached in real life, there is no "restart game" option ...

But video games? Such entertainment and culture is not new, being available for home use for over 30 years <http://www.icwhen.com/>. Rapid advances in graphics, processing power, game design and complexity have resulted in contemporary games rendering those of even just a few years ago crude and simplistic in comparison. Games are designed to sell, and therefore to be attractive, challenging, mind- engaging, stimulating, increasing curiosity, and inviting further exploration and an urge for "just one more go" - factors that have resulted in interest from the education, teaching and learning sectors; but more on this later.

Video games are most often found on video gaming consoles that plug into your television. These are produced by three well-known companies; Microsoft (who make the Xbox: <http://www.xbox.com/>), Sony (Playstation and Playstation2: <http://www.playstation.com/>), and Nintendo (GameCube:

<http://www.nintendo.com/systems/gcn/gcn_overview.jsp> and the handheld portable GameBoy series: <http://www.gameboyadvance.co.uk/>).

The PC is a major host of games, many of which make use of the standard keyboard and mouse input configuration for games such as strategy simulations. Other media devices, such as Interactive TV, handheld PCs and Palm Pilots, and the newer generations of mobile phone, play host to increasingly complex games - basically, where there is a processor and a screen, so there is the potential for games which is usually quickly filled.

It is important to note the increasing complexity of the aforementioned video gaming consoles, which increasingly resemble specialised, performance enhanced PCs - though without the cost, instability, long start-up waits, complexity and need for upgrades. The Xbox, for example, contains a hard drive for saving game positions and tracks from your favourite CDs, which then form the background music of various games. These consoles also offer broadband capabilities for fast online gaming play, though how they will work in practice when operational over the next few years remains to be seen. Currently, the PC, Macintosh and Sega Dreamcast video game console are the devices to use for online gaming.

This particular area of the games sector is of great relevance to the library and information community. Online gaming has actually been around for quite a few years on the PC, and was successfully implemented through a game called Phantasy Star Online on the Dreamcast console. The more popular online games, such as Everquest, allow complex and simultaneous in-game interaction between many thousands (and sometimes tens of thousands) of people (irrespective of physical location). In these games, people can exchange information and items, fight, move through a virtual world and observe the actions of others.

In an office where I recently worked, one person was playing such a game on his PC, interacting and communicating simultaneously with large numbers of players from around the (real) world in a shared, common (virtual) world. At the adjoining PC, another colleague was engaged in a long-term struggle to build a distributed bibliographic system, allowing a small number of people to simultaneously search a common database of the stock of several libraries. The technological and informatics parallels between the two systems - and which was the more successful implementation - were striking. Unfortunately, to date and to its loss, the informatics sector has not deeply investigated online gaming to see which techniques, technologies and concepts are transferable to systems using information access, discovery and management.

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of game-related courses in academic institutions, both in the UK <http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/~steve/games/gamesCourses.html> and further afield <http://www.igda.org/Endeavors/Outreach/Students-Newbies/students-newbies_schools.htm>. Most contain some element of game design or programming; demand comes

from the large number of prospective game developers, and companies faced with the continuing shortage of skilled staff.

Skills gained on these courses are transferable to other technological areas, such as health and medicine (e.g. body, illness and drug action simulation), the military (strategic, battle and weapon simulation, without costly weapons or friendly-fire injuries), and business and management (economic and management simulations). Grades for admittance on such courses are usually high, and applications oversubscribed. In the UK, several universities are planning new game- related courses for the 2002 or 2003 academic years.

In addition to courses, a number of game-related research centres have emerged of late in institutions such as Abertay in Dundee <http://www.iccave.com/>, Liverpool John Moores <http://www.icdc.org.uk/>, Bournemouth <http://ncca.bournemouth.ac.uk/>, Manchester <http://www.digiplay.org.uk/index2.php> and Teeside. Numerous other game-related projects and research groups are scattered around universities and colleges.

It is important to note that academic research is not confined to the programming side of video games. Academic subjects increasingly involved with the gaming sector include:

- the arts (graphics and character design)
- music (soundtracks and special effects)
- history (providing accurate detail from factual events)
- geography (landscapes and settings)
- literature (plot and script construction)
- biology and the life sciences (accurate plant and animal growth and behaviour)
- sports sciences (how athletes run)
- built and urban sciences (building design and layout)
- engineering (vehicle dynamics and handling)
- sociology (effects of games on society...)
- psychology (...and on the individual)

Such involvement has benefits for all parties. For academics, revenue is generated, staff kept on, and research used for practical purposes in the real world. Games companies receive relevant input, with the backing of academic expertise.

Not surprisingly, this research has led to a steadily increasing collection of articles, papers and reports, which a growing number of people and organisations are attempting to categorise and index: <http://www.game-culture.com/journals.html>, <http://www.game-culture.com/articles.html>, <http://www.knowledge.hut.fi/projects/games/gamelinks.html#Papers>, <http://www.digiplay.org.uk/books.php> and <http://www.gamasutra.com/features/>.

One of the most exciting areas where academia and the gaming sector overlap is that of education and learning. This can take one of two forms: using conventional computer and video games to enhance learning, or using gaming technologies and techniques to design and produce more effective learning software and material.

A number of research groups and centres are making progress with various aspects of gaming and education, such as the E-GEMS group in Canada <http://www.cs.ubc.ca/research/e-gems.htm> and the Games To Teach project in the MIT <http://cms.mit.edu/games/education/about.html>. In the UK, TEEM (Teachers Evaluating Educational Multimedia) have investigated the use and educational value of

computer games both at home and at school <http://www.teem.org.uk/howtouse/resources/>, while BECTa (British Educational Communications and Technology agency) have carried out similar investigations and produced guidelines on how computer games can support learning <http://www.becta.org.uk/technology/infosheets/html/computergames.html>. It is encouraging to see an increasing number of educational and ICT funding bodies, such as the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/techwatch/reports/tsw_02-01.rtf> either monitoring or funding exploratory or research work in this area.

In addition to official exploration and research of non-gaming uses of computer and video games, and gaming consoles, there are plenty of people who take a great delight in "making stuff do things it wasn't designed to do". As soon as a video game console is released, a community of people determined to take it apart, write their own programmes and increase the functionality, springs up. The hand-held GameBoy Advance, which is cheap and easy to develop software for (in an unofficial capacity), is the device of choice for many such developers <http://c.webring.com/hub?ring=thegameboyadvanc&id=2&hub>. For example, one student has developed a web server on his GameBoy Advance as part of his final year undergraduate project <http://www.fivemouse.com/>.

This article has scratched the surface of a number of game-related issues. However, to really appreciate games and their potential application in other areas, it is best to simply "play more". Games recommended by the author are Ico (Playstation 2), The Sims and Operation Flashpoint (PC), Advance Wars (GameBoy Advance), Halo (Xbox), and Super Monkey Ball (GameCube). Highly recommended - as it is my favourite game :-) - is Jet Set Radio Future (Xbox).

John Kirriemuir is an independent consultant in Digital Technologies, specialising in the application of video games and gaming technologies to education and the learning process. In younger days he worked in a number of organisations and services in the UK academic digital information sector, including UKOLN, the ILRT, and OMNI. On rainy days, John plays video games; on sunnier days, he explores the Scottish Highlands and Islands, taking digital pictures. Three of his ten favourite beaches in the world are in the Outer Hebrides. His web site, containing details of his work and publications, can be found at <http://www.ceangal.com/>.

Related Free Pint links:

- "Computer" industry articles and resources in the Free Pint Portal <http://www.freepint.com/go/p27>

- Post a message to the author, John Kirriemuir, or suggest further resources, at the Bar <http://www.freepint.com/bar>

- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <http://www.freepint.com/issues/160502.htm#tips>

- Access the entire archive of Free Pint articles and issues <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

Feature Article
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/160502.htm#feature>

"Weblogs and Blogging - Part 2"
By Laurel A. Clyde

Examples of Weblogs

As noted in the first part of this article <http://www.freepint.com/issues/020502.htm#feature>, many commentators have suggested that Blogger and similar programs have resulted in even more unreliable or mindless content on the Web than there was before.

However, Tim Archer <http://www.tradequeerthings.com/online.html>, while acknowledging the truth of this observation, prefers to think that weblogs are an empowering phenomenon; they make it possible, he says, for "everyone" to publish and to have other people read and respond to what they say. Well, you have been warned! At one end of the scale, there are weblogs that provide daily news updates from authoritative commentators in their field. At the other end are a range of personal weblogs whose titles, such as Absolute Piffle <http://www.nwlink.com/~rxg/piffle.html>, might be said to accurately reflect their content.

Having said that, though, there are days when reading about someone else's thoughts while walking their dog in a city on the other side of the world does have appeal. Nevertheless, "Many weblogs are pointless, self-indulgent, or interesting only to a small circle of people" <http://www.edventure.com/conversation/article.cfm?Counter=7444662>.

Some weblogs wither once the first flush of enthusiasm passes, while others go from strength to strength, attracting contributions and feedback from experts and interested Internet surfers. The weblogs discussed below are all maintained by experts in the topic covered by the weblog; all appear to have the potential to continue to attract an audience.

Jerz's Online and Offline Literacy Weblog <http://www.uwec.edu/Academic/Curric/jerzdg/writing/index.html> from Dennis G. Jerz of the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, covers "Links to writing resources, as well as articles, essays, and amusing Web pages related to literacy (both online and offline)". The resources are wide-ranging and come from newspapers, popular magazines, academic journals, other weblogs, searches of the Web, and students. The annotations are informative and offer comment as well as summaries. There are archives going back to 1999.

The Financial Applications Security Weblog from Pelle Braendgaard <http://radio.weblogs.com/0103213/> covers "The latest standards, software and policies affecting the security of financial applications". Although the author claims to "babble on a bit", he provides informed and informative discussion of a range of issues associated with security while dealing with specific standards and applications. This is a relatively new weblog but one that has already been the subject of favourable comment.

Other weblogs that stand out include BookNotes "Books, libraries, preservation, digital convergence, music, politic" from Craig Jensen <http://booknotes.weblogs.com/>, The Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog from Charles W. Bailey Jr. <http://info.lib.uh.edu/sepb/sepw.htm>, The Internet Scout Weblog from the Internet Scout Project <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/weblog/>, Privacy Digest from Paul Hardwick <http://PrivacyDigest.com/>, and New Media

Musings from J.D. Lasica <http://jd.manilasites.com/>.

Library and Information Science Weblogs

"Blogs are a natural for librarians" says Paula J. Hane <http://www.infotoday.com/newslink/newslink0110.htm>; certainly librarians have created a number of useful and well-regarded weblogs that cover either the broad field of library and information science, or specialist aspects of librarianship. Other weblogs are aimed at particular groups of people within the library and information professions - new librarians, for example. In addition, libraries have created weblogs for the benefit of their staff or users.

LISNews.com (Library and Information Science News) <http://lisnews.com/> has contributions from a number of people on any day, along with comments. In addition to providing good coverage of library and information science in general, it has items related to the Internet in libraries, intellectual property, filtering and censorship, freedom of information, electronic publishing, search engines, book news and awards, and information literacy. Harry Potter stories have their own special icon, so often do they come up.

Library News Daily <http://www.lights.com/scott/>, created by Peter Scott, has postings about new Internet information sources and material on the Internet related to libraries, including information on forthcoming conferences. The site has links to other resources that Peter has created, including A Complete Guide to Weblogs <http://www.lights.com/weblogs/> and a page of links to Library Weblogs, arranged by country <http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>.

Steven M. Cohen maintains the Library Stuff weblog <http://www.librarystuff.net/> which has links to news items from Internet- and print-based news services, and a useful list of his favorite weblogs. Librarian.net <http://www.librarian.net/> from Jessamyn West also provides general coverage of librarianship with links to current information. Gary Price's Virtual Acquisition Shelf and News Desk <http://resourceshelf.freepint.com/> is a great way to keep up with quality Internet resources. The usefulness of this weblog is enhanced through a free weekly "Highlights" mailing list.

Among the more specialized library-related weblogs are, for example, Roma's Reference Roundup <http://library.usask.ca/blogger/ref/> from Roma Kail at the University of Saskatchewan Library, and The Handheld Librarian (librarians working with handheld computer technology) <http://handheldlib.blogspot.com/>. For light relief from the serious business of librarianship, you can try The Laughing Librarian <http://www.laughinglibrarian.com/> from Brian Smith.

Weblogs that have been created by libraries include Liblog: A Library Weblog from the Redwood City Public Library , California <http://www.ci.redwood-city.ca.us/library/news/liblog/>; What's Happening in the Richland College Library , Texas <http://rllibrary.blogspot.com/>; the Leddy weblog from the Leddy Library, University of Windsor, Canada

<http://cronus.uwindsor.ca/units/leddy/leddy3.nsf/Weblog?OpenPage>; h2Oboro lib blog from Waterboro Public Library, Maine <http://www.waterboro.lib.me.us/blog.htm>; and the etc. weblog of Gateshead Public Library in the United Kingdom <http://refdesk.weblogger.com/>.

Weblog Search Engines and Directories

Finding out about quality weblogs can be a matter of serendipity. There is no single source of information about all weblogs. Nevertheless, a number of search engines and directories provide information about, and lists of, weblogs. In addition, weblog creation sites such as Blogger <http://www.blogger.com/> maintain lists of weblogs that have been created using their service.

Daypop <http://www.daypop.com/> is a specialist search engine that can be used to search either weblogs or news sources or both. However, the note on the home page, "Search 6800 news sites and weblogs for current events and breaking news (16 March 2002), while impressive at first glance, indicates that any weblog search is being carried out on a tiny proportion of the available weblogs. Daypop has a "Top 40" list of news stories of the day (including stories culled from weblogs), and its own Daypop Weblog.

.blog <http://pontoblog.tk/> is a new (2002) weblog directory that lists the weblogs by categories, by countries, by languages, by the number of visits, by the number of comments, by updates, and other criteria. It is currently available in English and Portuguese with other languages "coming soon", though when I last visited the site on 24 March 2002, there were still some problems with non-English language character sets. There were 999 weblogs listed on that date.

Yahoo!'s Directory of Weblogs provides an alphabetical list that can also be retrieved as a list by geographical location <http://dir.yahoo.com/Social_Science/Communications/Writing/Journals_and_Diaries/Online_Journals_and_Diaries/Web_Logs/>.

GBlogs <http://gblogs.threadnaught.net/> is a listing of weblogs in the United Kingdom (516 listed on 25 March 2002). Xenoblogs <http://www.fawny.org/xenoblogs/>, "Weblogs from outside the USA", provides access to weblogs in 30 countries (including the United Kingdom), with a list of other directories. Meanwhile, the Open Directory Project has a growing list of Library and Information Science Weblogs <http://dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Weblogs/>, a list that complements the list of Library Weblogs created by Peter Scott <http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>.

The observation made about the number of weblogs indexed by Daypop (above) is equally true of .blog and the other directories. Each of these services and directories indexes or lists a small proportion of the weblogs that are available. This means that searchers are forced back onto trusted weblogs for links to other weblogs, and onto Internet stalwarts like Yahoo! <http://www.yahoo.com/> and Google <http://www.google.com/> for access to information in weblogs.

Weblogs and You?

Many claims have been made for the usefulness of weblogs. At their best, they can "Help readers cope with an information avalanche", says Andy Wang <http://www.nytimes.com/library/tech/99/08/biztech/articles/02link.html> by highlighting and summarising useful material. Rebecca Blood suggests that they can also "contextualize" an article by listing it among related articles from different sources, so that "Each article, considered in the light of the other, may take on additional meaning" <http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html>. Weblogs may bring to the attention of the reader, material that would otherwise have been missed. On the other hand, weblogs are part of the "information avalanche", and perhaps part of the problem.

In the case of businesses, Dylan Tweney suggests that "Weblogs [can] Make the Web Work for You" <http://www.business2.com/articles/web/0,1653,37974,FF.html>. Public relations professionals have always monitored newspapers and magazines for coverage of their companies. In recent years, Internet-aware companies and organisations have also monitored chat forums, listservs and Usenet newsgroups to keep up with rumours and comment that could affect sales of their products or have an impact on public image. Dylan says that those companies should now also be monitoring relevant weblogs and even providing news feeds and stories to weblogs. In addition, organisations can establish and use their own weblogs to present information as they want it to be presented, and to communicate with clients or potential clients. As we saw earlier, some libraries are already doing this.

Weblogs can also have a place within an organisation, as part of an intranet. UserLand, creators of the Radio commercial weblog software, are slanting their marketing in this direction. They say, "Weblogs have emerged as a powerful knowledge management tool for corporations and education. Radio UserLand is a weblog tool that makes it easy for employees to quickly publish knowledge to an intranet where it is archived and is accessible to other employees using search engines" <http://www.userland.com/>. Weblogs might be one possibility within a knowledge management strategy, providing as they do for publishing, comment and collaboration.

In terms of weblogs, there do seem to be advantages and possibilities. However, there are many people who see them as nothing more than a passing fad. Whether or not the latter is true, John Hiler <http://www.corante.com/microcontent/articles/googleblog.shtml> points out that weblogs are already having an impact on most Web users through Google search results. He further notes that weblogs will probably continue to have such an impact for at least some time into the future, whether or not the Web users actually know what a weblog is.

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See you in two weeks!

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