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## Editorial

The new version of Free Pint in Adobe Acrobat format seems to have gone down extremely well and we've received some great feedback about it. Many of you have contacted us, both by email and at the Bar, to tell us you like the newsletter-style formatting and find it much clearer to read, print and pass to colleagues.

"I much prefer the Acrobat version. It is easier to take away to read, more friendly on the eye, and less paper has to be a good thing"

"Much easier for train reading"

"Love the PDF format. A lot easier to find information, great to show to friends!"

"I actually got to read it all this time - and as a consequence I got a lot more out of it."

I'm particularly pleased about this last comment since we do understand that the text version of the newsletter can be quite daunting to read all the way through. We will therefore now be publishing the Free Pint newsletter by email, HTML (on the Web site) and in Acrobat format at <http://www.freepint.com/issues/181001.pdf>.

Our UK company research gateway has just been significantly enhanced with the addition of individual company director reports. These reports give a lot of information about individual directors, including

details of nationality, birth date, address and a list of all their live and resigned directorships of trading companies, dissolved companies and those with insolvency proceedings.

The reports cost just 8 pounds (about US\$11) and an example can be seen at <http://www.freepint.com/icc/sample/sample.htm>.

In today's Free Pint we bring you the usual mix of tips and site reviews, with articles on WAP resources and working in information in the voluntary sector. There is also news of further enhancements to the upgraded "Regular" membership, which I would encourage you to consider if you haven't yet signed up. As a Regular you will receive our popular weekly current awareness newsletter and your paid support really does help us to enhance the Free Pint service. More details at <http://www.freepint.com/regular/>.

If you enjoy today's edition of Free Pint then do pass it on to your colleagues and friends.

Cheers

William Hann  
Founder and Managing Editor

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## TRADE PARTNERS UK INFORMATION CENTRE INTERNET DATABASE WORKSHOPS

Trade Partners UK Information Centre provides FREE access to 11 subscription Internet databases. We will be holding Internet Database Workshops with representatives from Datamonitor, Dun & Bradstreet, EIU and Euromonitor on 29th October at Trade Partners UK Information Centre, 66-74 Victoria Street, London, SW1. For further information please phone 020-7215-5444/5445 or visit [www.tradepartners.gov.uk/information\\_centre](http://www.tradepartners.gov.uk/information_centre) for an application form.

[tp981]

## New: Detailed Reports On Individual Company Directors

So, who exactly is this company director  
you've been reading about?

For just 8 pounds you can find out all about them,  
including all the companies they have been involved with:

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

## 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" and "Student Bar". Free Pint Regulars (paid members) also receive a weekly current awareness newsletter, discounts and publicity. Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out and viewed in a Courier font.

## My Favourite Tipples from Sinead Williams

- I like to read newspapers like the Guardian and the Ham & High, not readily available in Melbourne  
<<http://www.ecola.com/news/press/>>.
- <<http://www.profusion.com/>> - My favourite Invisible Web site, that can even find items in the State Library of Victoria's Images Database.
- To find PDF files for reports, conference papers and "grey literature" I use either <<http://searchpdf.adobe.com/>> or put "search term inurl:pdf" in the search bar in Google <<http://www.google.com/>>.
- <<http://www.corporateinformation.com/>> - My favourite all-purpose business site where I can get company information, country profiles and nice neat combinations of country/industry profiles.
- Looking for a site you saw advertised somewhere or heard of, but can't remember the exact name? Simply go to <<http://www.amnesi.com>> and type in the name the best you can remember. Even if the name is spelt incorrectly the search engine will try to match names in the database and give you a list of similar names.

Sinead Williams is Information Research Coordinator at WMC Resources in Melbourne. Before moving to Australia in 1991 she was with Bain & Co. (1988-1990) and First Contact 1991 in London.

## 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>>]

The Pub Crawl has quickly become a must-read in the information world, and we are continually enhancing it for Regulars. It now includes a detailed site review, and multi-user license holders can have the Pub Crawl delivered directly to their colleagues by email.

In the last two weeks alone we've reviewed freely available full-text articles appearing in Searcher, EContent Magazine, Computers in Libraries, The Register, Tourbus, SearchDay, Business2.com, Clickz, CyberAtlas, McKinsey Quarterly, NYPost.com, Infotoday's Newsbreaks, Competitive Intelligence Magazine, Information Today, Fortune.com, BusinessWeek.com, Newsbytes.com, InfoWorld, Silicon.com and SearchDay.

We will also shortly be introducing a voucher referral scheme. If you encourage others to become a Regular then you will receive a free month's Regular membership, and so will the person who signs up. We'll be writing to all Regulars to inform them of their voucher code.

William Hann, Managing Editor  
<[william@freepint.com](mailto: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).]

## Free Pint Fact

Since there have been nearly 100 editions of Free Pint, making 200 articles, it can be quite tricky for the 1000 new Free Pinters we're welcoming each month to find past articles of interest.

The Free Pint Portal lists articles by year, topic and issue. There is also an archive of daily tipples from the Bar.  
<<http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>>

## Studying for an Information-Related Qualification?

If you're stuck on a project and want to draw on the experience of the international Free Pint readership, then post a message to the Student Bar. It's a great free resource, and we wish there'd been something like it when we were studying for our information degrees.

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

## Free Pint Gold

This time last year we looked at Web sites with geological information, focusing on mineral exploration. Of interest to information professionals around the world, the feature article pointed to key European document delivery suppliers.

- Free Pint No.73, 19th October 2000 "Geology On The Web" and "European Document Delivery Suppliers and Resources On The World Wide Web".  
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/191000.htm>>

Free Pint two years ago covered modern music sites, from fanzines to music industry sources. The feature introduced us to ADSL, which we are big fans of in the Free Pint office.

- Free Pint No.48, 21st October 1999 "Notes on the Net: A trawl around the Music Sites" and "Unblocking the Web: digital technology and the telephone line".  
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/211099.htm>>

Sticking with comms, three years ago there was detailed information on setting up a modem. This was followed by a discussion about the availability of

consumer health information on the Web.

- Free Pint No.24, 15th October 1998 "How to select and optimise your PC Internet modem" and "A guide to Consumer Health Information on the 'Net'".  
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/151098.htm>>

## Online Information 2001: Worldwide answers to your information needs

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

DON'T MISS early bird discount - ends 5 November 2001!  
Keep in touch with the latest information resources, tools and techniques and hear expert case studies from leading industry experts at this essential international conference.

[i982]

**Free Pint Bar**  
**In Association with Factiva**  
**a Dow Jones & Reuters Company****Reviewed by Simon Coltery**<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/041001.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>>]

As the remaining leaves on the trees turn a deeper golden, Free Pinters' thoughts turn to business matters. Their thoughts range from trying to raise capital (13307, 13150), costing projects (13329), getting advice on running an ebusiness (13157) and keeping track of European IPOs (13290). There were also questions about writing business plans (13340) and evaluating an online business research site (13168).

The business of online content has been aired with postings about copyright law as it relates to digital maps (13285), protecting online financial news (13214), locating Korean media sites (13306) and selecting a press cuttings agency (13191). Someone is also looking for a free source of patent specs delivered by email (13332).

Researchers have been enquiring about knowledge management in the financial services sector (13299), biometric technologies, with special reference to fingerprint readers (13264), finding credit card details on individuals in Germany (13263) and population data for Eastern European cities (13374).

There have been resources proffered in the Bar covering library related web logs (13377), taxonomy and classification software (13201) and recruitment agencies (13224). And there have been requests for sources of information on US and UK public policy (13381) and a 2002 calendar of world events (13379).

I'm glad to see that the number of technical questions has not declined much, though. Free Pinters have been looking for free online SAGE tutorials (13222), circuit diagrams for ICL VE17C monitors (13289), off the shelf portals (13342), bulk fiche printing services (13160) and bulk emailing software (13167). And there was a query about knowledge management technologies used specifically in libraries (13322).

Other technical questions involved programming in Outlook 2000 (13380), Windows keyboard shortcuts (13256, 13364), re-registering domain names (13255), backing up Outlook (13314), searching tables in Access (13158) and slow-down problems in Windows (13163). There was also a question about exporting an Access database into a comma-delimited file and back again (13267).

Finally, the more miscellaneous messages have been about purchasing cost effective telephone cards (13319), getting work in Germany (13227), finding some chemical algorithms (13336), defining some computing terms (13234) and linking UK electoral ward data to postal codes (13159).

Free Pinters also wondered about translating some Latin phrases (13166, 13230), installing ADSL at half the usual cost (13383), pinpointing a generation, exactly (13265), estimating the annual turnover of the UK angling market (13282) and finding team building activities, aside from survival exercises (13183). For what it's worth, I'd recommend choral singing as a paradigm of teamwork. Just try singing out of tune in a choir and you'll see what I mean.

**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 the benefits of joining professional associations (1880), Web based business strategies (1896) and job fairs for library and information professionals (1898). There were also questions about health information centres (1881) and property management companies (1886). And I posted some information on US university ranking data (1894), as that seems to be a popular topic.

Simon Coltery, Content Developer <[simon@freepint.com](mailto: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](mailto:digest@freepint.com)>. For the Student Bar Digest contact <[studentdigest@freepint.com](mailto:studentdigest@freepint.com)>.

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If you're looking for a job in the information world, then you should be checking out Free Pint Jobs.

Set up a profile and we will email you every Tuesday with the latest jobs which match your requirements.  
<<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>

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This new community has resources that illustrate how various types of knowledge workers, including information professionals, can use Factiva content more effectively.

Knowledge Network also provides professional development tools, information on understanding today's technology and product tips on using Dow Jones Interactive, Reuters Business Briefing and Factiva.com more effectively. Sign up for free monthly updates at <<http://www.factiva.com/knowledgenetwork>>

[fa983]

**Free Pint Jobs**<<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>**In association with Sue Hill Recruitment,  
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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:

**Researcher**<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1403>>

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Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

**Information Specialist**<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1414>>

Self motivated & experienced researcher sought by small consultancy to provide information service & undertake ad hoc projects

Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment and Services 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.

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

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

The National Institute of Informatics, Tokyo, are organising the "International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications 2001" from the 22nd of October in Tokyo, Japan. To find out what the "Dublin Core" is, see the introduction in Free Pint No.36 <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/150499.htm#tips>>.

Stateside there are a few meetings at the end of this month and the beginning of November. "KMWorld" from Information Today is in Santa Clara, California, and their "Internet Librarian" conference takes place in Pasadena, California. The American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST) have their Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

Provisional details of forthcoming conferences and exhibitions in the online-information and Internet industries can be found on the Free Pint Events page <<http://www.freepint.com/events>>. If you're organising an event then submit details via this page and please keep us informed about any change to the events planned.

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## Free Pint Bookshelf

<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>**"Super Searchers on Wall Street -  
Top Investment Professionals Share Their Online Research Secrets"**  
Written by Amelia Kassel and Reva Basch (Editor)  
Reviewed by Sheila Webber

"Sounds like a cross between a computer game and an Enid Blyton novel" remarked a friend. Although there could be room for a spin-off cartoon ("Supersearchers to the rescue! Planet saved weekly by quartet of teenage infopros with their cute-but-deadly pets!") at the moment the Super Searchers series consists of interviews with collections of information professionals.

In this case, as the title says, it is North American specialists in investment information. Ten people (one per chapter) are asked similar questions. For example, do they have tips on searching SEC data; how do they stay up to date; are some investment sources more reliable, what does their job entail? In addition, there is an index, a useful glossary of US investment terminology and a list of 242 sources. There is an online version of this list freely available at <http://www.infotoday.com/supersearchers/superwall.htm> (bookmark it now!).

As with the other Super Searchers books, the interest comes from reading about the interviewees' advice on search strategy and sources. You may also get some background about a searcher whose writing or website you admire. In my case, I was interested to learn more about Gary Klein (business librarian at Willamette University), who it turns out was making money on the stock markets from a tender age.

The interviewees come from a variety of backgrounds and institutions, which provides some contrast. For example, investment magazine editor and columnist Tish Williams says that she

finds "almost all the information I need on the Web" (p48). "I want to be able to just type in what I need at a URL and get what I need quickly" (p49). However, others point out problems with free web-based material. Klein highlights the dubious nature of advice on bulletin boards. Martha DiVittorio, Information Services Manager at Oliver Wyman, emphasises that her time is billed to clients, so a quick priced search may be cheaper than a lengthy "free" web search.

A key point that comes through is to check and cross check data, wherever it comes from, and to look for clear statements about exactly what is included and how the data has been manipulated.

This book is definitely worth getting if you regularly need to find US company and investment data. Those doing investment work in other countries will also find advice on strategy and source types interesting, though when it comes to detail, there is little about the non-US scene. If you want to work in this area, or teach those that do, then the interviews have value as case studies. Others will probably not see the book as a must-have, because of its specialist nature and US bias.

Sheila Webber  
<[s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk)> is a lecturer in the Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, UK. She has recently relocated and updated her sites on \*Information literacy\* (now at <http://dis.shef.ac.uk/literacy/>) and \*Marketing of information\* (now at <http://dis.shef.ac.uk/sheila/marketin g/>).

**British Library - Consumer Health Care on the Internet**, 16 November 2001. While the internet offers a growing volume of consumer-oriented health care information, it is not well organised and is of very variable quality. This half-day hands-on course will help you discover how search engines work; how to cut through the maze of internet sources; how to choose where to search for which information saving you valuable time and money. For more information call Dave Townsend 020 7412 7473 or <http://www.bl.uk/services/stb/courses.html>

[b1984]

**Related Free Pint links:**

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- "Super Searchers on Wall Street - Top Investment Professionals Share Their Online Research Secrets" ISBN 0910965420 published by Cybage Books and written by Amelia Kassel and Reva Basch (Editor).
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If you're not having much luck through the traditional channels, then try:  
<<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>

## Tips Article

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/041001.htm#tips>>

### "WAP Sites and the Mobile Internet" By Duncan Parry

When WAP enabled devices and mobile phones began to appear, the usual amount of hype filled the technology sections of the press. It seemed as if everyone would be walking around accessing e-mail on the move, ordering that must-have CD from the bus queue and checking the markets whilst walking the dog.

In fact, whilst mobile phone sales remained buoyant following the introduction of WAP, the number of WAP phone owners who access the Internet is debatable. In September of 2000 the BBC reported that in the UK less than 1% of users accessed the Internet via WAP - and then reported in the January of 2001 that BT Genie's WAP service saw traffic rise 513% to the end of December.

Debates about user numbers aside, I'll try and highlight some of the useful WAP sites and services available in this article, and provide guidance on how to view them without paying for the mobile phone call.

#### WAP via the Desktop

There are several free emulators available that allow you to view WAP sites on your computer. As the cost of the call to a WAP service can be quite high, this can be a cost effective way of finding useful WAP services without running up a high telephone bill.

Gelon <<http://www.gelon.net/>> allows you to type in a WAP site address and view it via your site - and usefully offers a directory of WAP sites too. You can also add it to your own site for free.

M3Gate <<http://www.m3gate.com/>> works by installing a WAP browser onto your computer and displaying WAP sites in that, and will automatically open any WAP links you click on in your normal (Internet Explorer or Netscape) browser. This is what I've used to research this article.

Klondike <<http://www.apachesoftware.com/>> also offer a WAP browser to download, with versions for both the PC and Pocket PC.

#### Finding WAP Sites via the Web

When looking for WAP sites via my normal browser, my first thought was to try one of the big name search engines or portals and use their WAP directory.

Lycos UK <<http://mobileportal.lycos.co.uk/wap/index.jsp?page=m>> offers a WAP site directory focused on the UK, with a search option, the ability to view sites via their emulator and store bookmarks. Lycos US offer a similar service <<http://pinpoint.lycos.com/>>.

Yahoo also offer a WAP directory <<http://mobile.yahoo.com/wireless/home>> and the ability to add the WAP link to a list of bookmarks. You can then add to your WAP device via Yahoo's WAP service. This could be useful - but it also ties you into storing bookmarks with Yahoo.

Looksmart <<http://www.wapls.com/lslsc>> also offer a directory. This isn't as extensive as some of the other directories, but the sites are reviewed by Looksmart's editors so the quality is good. I expect this will grow quickly and appear on sites like MSN, Excite and others that use Looksmart's content (if it hasn't already).

Beyond the 'big names' of searching, there are several prominent specialist sites that focus just on providing WAP site directories.

Awooga <<http://www.awooga.com/>> offers a category based directory of some 4000+ WAP sites. The sites are accompanied by descriptions, a star rating, comments from users and an indication of how many Awooga users have bookmarked each site - which can be a good indication of quality. You can also preview sites using Awooga's built in emulator. The problem with this site is that the directory structure only exists at the top level; a full directory structure would place sites in subcategories according to topic, region etc. Instead, you are presented with a long list of links over several pages.

There are numerous other WAP directories - you can find some of these here on Lycos UK, as well as mobile phone and SMS sites - <[http://www.lycos.co.uk/dir/Telecommunications\\_and\\_Internet/Mobiles\\_\\_SMS\\_and\\_WAP/](http://www.lycos.co.uk/dir/Telecommunications_and_Internet/Mobiles__SMS_and_WAP/)>.

#### Finding WAP sites with your WAP device

Of course, finding useful WAP sites via your computer is all very well when you have time to spare, but what services are available to find sites via your WAP device?

Google offers a WAP search facility for use of WAP devices <<http://wap.google.com>>. Interestingly, Google don't have a WAP page directory on their main (HTML) site - probably because the Google directory is based on the Open Directory, which doesn't have one.

Google's WAP search offers a unique (as far as I know) feature - the ability to search normal web pages and convert their content from HTML to WML for reading on your WAP device. It sounds like such a good idea I had to put it through it's paces.

First off I couldn't access the WAP service via M3Gate, which I was using to look at WAP sites via my PC - this shows that WAP emulators aren't 100% accurate; Gelon.net's emulator loaded Google okay. To start I tried searching simply for 'Free Pint' - and hit another problem: the 'page requested' couldn't be found (i.e. a broken link).

After several tries I gave up on the Google WAP search - I'm pretty sure it works okay, but that the emulators simply couldn't understand it. I tried another emulator

### Just How Do You Find Those Information-Related Vacancies?

If you're looking for a job in the information world, then you should be checking out Free Pint Jobs.

Set up a profile and we will email you every Tuesday with the latest jobs which match your requirements.  
<<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>

just in case - this was convinced the page was HTML. Frustrating, to say the least. If anybody has successfully used this service, maybe they could share their experiences on the Free Pint Bar?

Lycos US also offer a WAP based service <<http://wap.lycos.com/>>. This one struck me as particularly useful (yes, I do work for Lycos, but in the UK, so I'd never seen this before). You can set up a personal 'My Lycos' page of news headlines, etc., on the Lycos.com site and access it via your WAP device too - including email according to the options I was presented with. There's also a directory of WAP sites with popular topics including News, Sport and Stocks, which seemed extensive enough to provide basic information like headlines, results, prices, etc. This site did work okay most of the time - there seemed to be some broken links, though.

Gelon <<http://wap.gelon.net>> offer a directory and a search option. Some quick searches on this convinced me it's quite useful and a worthy competitor to the WAP presences of the big name search engines. The sites I found via it worked okay and matched my searches quite well.

Awooga <<http://wap.awooga.com>> offer a WAP based version of their site - with a WAP directory, news headlines and a top ten of WAP sites. The same categories are available as on the HTML site, and again the category system only exists for the top level, without a search option. However most of the links I sampled worked and the sites were of a reasonable quality and range of topics - I found myself playing Hangman, reading the financial news and researching a 3 Star Hotel in Milan.

### Popular Sites

From this limited sample of sites it's obvious that there are useful WAP sites available - problems with the technology notwithstanding. So which stand out from the crowd?

Awooga list the top ten sites visited via their directory - when I visited, number one was Crash.net, a motor sports news and results site covering Nascar, F1, Superbikes etc.

Next on Awooga's chart was WAP88.com <<http://wap88.com>>. This service offers users access to ICQ via their device and the ability to pick up e-mail from existing accounts that support POP3. Useful in concept - although there was little help information on either the WAP or HTML site.

Third was Ent24.com <<http://ents24.com>> a UK focused entertainment site - you enter your postcode and it will list clubs, theatres, and other venues for a night out. I have to say I was impressed with the list it presented for my area - in fact there were a couple of places I hadn't heard of. Clicking a venue displays their telephone and address details, so on a hastily planned night out this could be very useful.

Moving away from Awooga's chart, news site Ananova's WAP site <<http://wap.ananova.com/>> offers news for the UK, World, business and Entertainment, including topic specific headlines (e.g. Foot and Mouth) and each story is followed by links to related pieces. You can also get breaking news alerts sent to your device - overall a very

useful news site.

### WAP - Does it Work?

My opinion of WAP remains unchanged after writing this article; there are some useful WAP sites out there, but the potential of mobile access to the Internet is constrained by the basic nature of WML and WAP devices: black and white text and static, low resolution graphics on small screens. Unless you specifically need to use a service offered via WAP, it can be a frustrating and expensive way of accessing the Internet.

No doubt there are Free Pint readers out there who disagree - a new thread in the Free Pint Bar, perhaps? I do believe, however, that the third generation of mobile phones with improved displays and developments in standards will start to deliver a more useful mobile Internet - as long as the cost of accessing it doesn't become prohibitively high. And do I have a WAP phone now? Yes. Do I use it? No, not a lot.

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### Related Free Pint links:

- "WAP Technology and Services" article in Free Pint No.65 <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/220600.htm>>
- "Telecommunications" articles and resources in the Free Pint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p134>>
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**Feature Article**

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/041001.htm#feature>>

**"Working in Information in the UK Voluntary Sector"**  
**By Helen Bilton****Introduction**

Information work is not traditionally associated with the voluntary sector. However, today there are plenty of opportunities as the sector rapidly catches on to the need to exploit information. The aim of this article is to offer some pointers and places to look for vacancies and advice.

**The UK Voluntary Sector**

The UK voluntary sector (also known as the charity, 'third' or not-for-profit sector) is large and wide-ranging. The definition of a 'voluntary' organisation simply indicates that the Management Committee and Trustees are unpaid volunteers. This means that whilst a large proportion of sector members are small groups run entirely by volunteers, there are also plenty of paid posts in a range of professional areas.

**Information in the UK Voluntary Sector**

Most voluntary organisations depend heavily on information to function. For those which provide advice and information on a particular subject or to a particular group it is the very purpose of their existence. For others it is a fundamental resource, and in many cases they are only just starting to realise the benefits of managing it properly. The following quote, from a 1999 report by Burt and Taylor on ICT and the Voluntary Sector, illustrates the current situation perfectly:

As the sector engages with the information society - its complex networks, its customer focus, its emphasis on service quality, and its increasingly competitive nature - the capability of voluntary organisations, not just to move information around existing channels, but actively to exploit information flows and to innovate around these, becomes crucial.

So, lots of opportunities for information workers! However, locating the posts may not be as easy as it perhaps is in other sectors. One thing to bear in mind is that the voluntary sector usually relies on vacancy advertising and until fairly recently not many jobs were available through agencies. Another is that often organisations are not aware that what they really need is someone with information skills.

**Where and how to look for vacancies**

As indicated, finding an information job in the voluntary sector involves mainly looking at vacancy adverts - and looking hard because what you want may be well hidden. Most organisations need to minimise recruitment costs and will often save a number of vacancies and place one big advert, say once a month. Your dream job may well be hidden between an advert for a Head of Operations and a cleaner.

The biggest problem, though, is in finding the right

keywords. 'Information' is very broad but narrowing it to 'information officer', 'librarian', etc., would cut out many potential jobs. Most jobs will appear somewhere on the Internet, but relying on an alert or saved search is unlikely to produce useful results. You will have to do the leg work yourself.

There are two basic kinds of information jobs in the voluntary sector, although you will often see job descriptions which mix both:

- External facing jobs i.e. those which deal with the provision of information to the public. Many organisations are primarily in existence to provide public information on a particular topic and most others will have some kind of publicity, marketing or campaigning function. Keywords to look for would be 'advice', 'helpline', 'information service', 'web', 'research', as well as the obvious 'information officer/manager'.

- Internal jobs dealing with the organisation's management information and in-house collections. These jobs can be very wide-ranging and often include elements of external-facing work. Keywords to look for would be as above plus 'performance', 'monitoring', 'quality', 'policy' and 'intranet'. Keep an eye on posts categorised as administrative as well - on careful reading these can often turn out to have a very hefty information component.

**Sources of vacancies**

The Guardian Society jobs section on Wednesdays (also at <<http://society.guardian.co.uk/jobs/charities/0,10353,503,164,00.html>>) is probably the most useful UK source for information jobs in the voluntary sector. Currently there are 10-15 information jobs a week advertised, although this number includes government/public sector jobs too. There are some voluntary sector specific websites, but no one single source and you may find you have to do a lot of browsing. The most useful are listed below.

Charity People at <<http://www.charitypeople.com>> is a useful, well-known site with plenty of vacancies but no categories so you'll have to hit lucky with guessing a job title.

Charityopps.com at <<http://www.charityopps.com/home.htm>> has categories but no obvious home for information work and they don't seem to have many jobs in their database. Their sister site <<http://www.charityrecruitment.co.uk/home.html>> covers their work as a recruitment agency.

Jobs in Charities at <<http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk/public>> does have a category for 'Info, Policy and Research' and vacancies are clearly presented.

CharityJob at <<http://www.charityjob.co.uk>> has no obvious category - information jobs are in 'Other'. Some basic advice for young people thinking of a career is at <<http://www.charityjob.co.uk/StartingOut.htm>>.

CharityJobs.co.uk at <<http://www.charityjobs.co.uk/>> is a bit hard to use and seems to have a limited collection. You

can really only search by geography as it doesn't recognise 'information' as a skill.

Charity Action Recruitment at <http://www.lwts.org.uk/car/Index.htm> are primarily a recruitment agency but vacancies are advertised on the site and they appear to have some interesting ones.

Not for Profit Jobs at <http://www.conferencehouse.co.uk/nfpjobs/index.htm> offers the chance to have all their jobs e-mailed to you, but again there is no specific category for 'information'.

Many charities will also post job vacancies on their own website, but this is really only any use if you want to target a specific organisation.

Finally, there are the usual sources of information jobs - particularly useful if you want to give the agency route a try.

The trade press (LA Record, Managing Information, etc.) rarely carry voluntary sector jobs - but there have been a few interesting ones recently.

Free Pint Jobs at <http://www.freepint.com/jobs> - is useful because it allows you to choose the public sector option and they seem to have a good quantity.

Sue Hill <http://www.suehill.com> have a range of public sector jobs. Other agencies tend not to be able to list all of the jobs they currently have in the voluntary sector (e.g. at TFPL you have to look through them all) - but they never have many.

### What is working in the Voluntary Sector like?

The good bits:

- The chance to work in a not-for-profit environment where you can really make a difference to people's lives through your work.
- Plenty of scope for innovation and great opportunities to practise your skills. Voluntary sector cultures are traditionally fairly forgiving of errors, supportive and willing to let individuals take the initiative.
- There are often compensations for poor pay structures such as flexible working, longer holidays, pensions etc.

The not-so-good bits:

- The pay can be poor, but not necessarily any worse than the rest of the information sector.
- It can feel a bit isolated, you may be one of just a handful of people in an organisation who understand information. It is common to find yourself managed by someone with no information background who is doing a completely different job.
- Career progression may be a problem.
- Few posts are available outside London - although this is changing.

### Where to look for advice

The following resources are useful starting points to find out about working in the voluntary sector in general.

Guardian Society's section on careers in the voluntary and public sectors - this is an excellent resource with plenty of interesting articles  
<http://www.societyguardian.co.uk/careers>.

VolResource's page on working in the sector  
<http://www.volresource.org.uk/workopps/worksect.htm>

Working for a Charity at <http://www.wfac.org.uk/>.

CharityOpps produce a booklet answering some basic questions which can be downloaded as a .pdf from  
<http://www.charityopps.com/booklet.PDF>.

An overview of the current issues facing the sector can be found at the NCVO <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk>.

Worth keeping an eye on is the forthcoming first ever careers fair for the sector at <http://www.forum3.co.uk>.

### Conclusion

It is definitely an exciting time to work in information in the UK voluntary sector and new opportunities are opening up all the time. You may find that the jobs are hard to spot and there may be an element of making it up as you go along when you get there but take it from someone who's doing it - the rewards are worth it.

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Helen Bilton works as an Information Officer for St Mungo's, a large London homelessness agency. She has worked there for three and a half years and is also studying part-time for an MSc in Information Science at City University.

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Many thanks for reading today's Free Pint. We hope you got a lot out of it and will share it with others. Don't forget to check out the Adobe Acrobat version for a newsletter-style layout. See you in two weeks!

William Hann, Founder and Managing Editor  
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