

12 "RSS Update: It's RSS, Jim, but Not as We Know It"

RSS is still less than transparent for many, but expert Roddy MacLeod gives a resource-packed overview of new developments, tools and projects, particularly in scholarly fields.

18 "Knowledge, Information and the Business Process: Revolutionary Thinking or Common Sense?"

Michael Gutierrez reviews Liz Taylor's book, whose intent is to blend elements of information and knowledge management with business processes and intellectual capital to create change.

20 "Calling in the Specialists: Enhancing Your Services with Subcontractors"

Adding to your skill set through outside experts and researchers can save time and expand your capacity. But it does take some knowledge and planning. Marcy Phelps presents a helpful guide.



Plus ...

Jobs,
Discussion,
Tips, Reviews
and Events

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Editorial



We call ourselves information experts, experienced in navigating the jungles of an industry that leaves many grappling through the undergrowth. But for all that we are info pros, there's one technology that causes many furrowed brows: RSS.

The complexities begin with the acronym, which stands for different terms depending on who you ask, and continue with how it's best sent, how it's best received and what its true potential is.

For clarification on this technology that swiftly delivers content to multitudes, we turn to Roddy MacLeod, who has written on the topic for us since RSS was in its infancy. His latest article, below, addresses new advances and additions and profiles one of his new RSS projects.

We ask another information expert, Marcy Phelps, for her navigational advice, this time on the business side of the information industry. Her article explains what to consider when you've got more work than you can handle and need to call in a subcontractor.

Also in this issue, Michael Gutierrez reviews Liz Taylor's "Knowledge, Information and the Business Process: Revolutionary Thinking or Common Sense?", a book that presents theories on combining information and knowledge management with business processes and intellectual capital.

And, as ever, you'll also read what's hot at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>. Swing by today to weigh in on what you think of this issue or what you'd like to see in future newsletters.

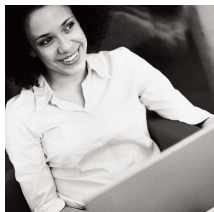
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Paula Murdoch is an Account Manager for the Information Management division of Tribal Group Plc. She manages outsourced library and information services on behalf of her clients across the UK <<http://www.tribalgroup.co.uk/>>.

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My Favourite Tipples

by Paula Murdoch

Here are a few sites that I keep tucked away for those odd occasions when I need something quite specific but from a respectable and reliable source - except the last tittle; that one is totally selfish!

- Nethouseprices <<http://www.nethouseprices.com/>> provides information on how much houses have sold for in the UK, searchable by postcode or area. Information is taken from the Land Registry and dates back to 2000.
- Jakob Nielsen's <<http://www.useit.com/>> is dedicated to website usability, by this renowned expert on the subject. The site includes statistics, reports, guidance and trends. Excellent for all levels of expertise in this field.
- Go to the Copac library catalogue <<http://www.copac.ac.uk/>> to search over 32 million records across Copac's holdings, a union catalogue of merged online catalogues for all of the members of CURL (Consortium of Research Libraries).
- OnlineConversion.com <<http://www.onlineconversion.com/>> is a very comprehensive conversion resource that converts currency, speeds, weights, lengths, volumes, times, clothing sizes and a lot more, including measurements in astronomy!
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Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7218>>

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Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment and Services Limited

Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7225>>

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Monique Cuvelier is editor of the FreePint Newsletter. She has edited, launched and written for many magazines, newspapers and websites in the US and UK. Learn more about her at <http://www.onopolny.com/support/team/>.

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Bar members are hot on blogs these days, with questions about credibility and popularity (more on downloading blogs through RSS feeds in Roddy MacLeod's article). Below are summaries of a few Bar discussions, but there's much more at <http://www.freepint.com/bar>.

- What if we just closed down public libraries altogether? A rash thought, but one that's being thrown around in the Bar. Some aren't happy with IT policies, restrictions and the level of expertise at their local libraries, so what would happen if taxpayers chose to funnel their money into private libraries instead? Your view? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b160152>.
- Boing Boing or Techcrunch? For your money, which would you say is the most popular blog in the UK <http://www.freepint.com/go/b160725>? To be sure, it's an evolving list, but some Bar members are still discussing what's top of the blogs.
- A member of the Student Bar is also looking for information on blogs <http://www.freepint.com/go/s28572>. This person is preparing for a dissertation by evaluating how people judge the credibility of news blogs. For more information about setting up RSS feeds, read Roddy MacLeod's article in this issue.

- Many businesses would never succeed without a decent proposal. These documents are formulaic, so someone is asking what the best template is to draft one. A few ideas: <http://www.freepint.com/go/b157773>.
- Any archaeologists who can dig up market capitalisations of the individual constituents of the FTSE 100 on 1 January 1990 would find a fan in the Bar. Suggestions for historical market capitalisation figures are welcome <http://www.freepint.com/go/b155362>, and some interesting sources have already cropped up.

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"RSS Update: It's RSS, Jim, but Not as We Know It"

By Roddy Macleod



Roddy MacLeod, MA, DipLib, MCILIP <<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libwww/libram/roddy.html>> is Senior Subject Librarian at Heriot-Watt University. He edits the Internet Resources Newsletter, manages the TechXtra service (a free service for technology information), and provides management support for the ticTOCs project. He was the Information World Review Information Professional of the Year in 2000, and has led initiatives which have won three marketing and publicity awards. He co-edited the 4th edition of 'Information sources in engineering', published by KG Saur, which was chosen by the Engineering Libraries Division of the ASEE as 2006 Best Reference Work.

One of the classic lines from Star Trek was when, on seeing new life on a strange planet, Dr McCoy turned to Captain Kirk and said in an ominous tone: 'It's life, Jim, but not as we know it.' I have replaced 'life' with 'RSS' in the title of this article not merely to catch your eye, but also because I feel that the time has come to change our perspective towards RSS and regard it as something less alien.

For anyone who may have been in a time capsule since Dr McCoy last boarded the Enterprise, RSS is a format for sharing content on the Web. Traditionally associated with news items, and more recently blogs, RSS can in fact be used to syndicate content from almost any list orientated information.

RSS has great potential, and its use is growing. I wrote about it some time ago in FreePint 161 ("RSS: Less Hype, More Action" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/170604.htm#feature>>), and I still stand by my perception that RSS will not create an actual 'revolution'. However, as I said in 2004, it is an extremely useful protocol, it is important for the information community, and its use is likely to grow.

One thing that has held back RSS is that it is a slightly difficult concept to explain and grasp. For a start, people often want to know what the initials 'RSS' stand for. RSS can stand for 'Rich Site Summary', 'RDF Site Summary' or 'Really Simple Syndication' depending on whom you ask and which version they are speaking about.

Then there is the fact that to read RSS content, feed reader or aggregator software may be required, and this can be either desktop- or Web-based. Of course, the latest browsers are making it easier to subscribe to feeds, and even the growth in use of the term 'feed' has helped to some extent. However, it is still necessary to understand the reasonably complex concept of subscribing to regularly updated content produced elsewhere, which is subsequently presented via a medium of choice. At the same time, it is not quite as simple as that, because it is also possible to read RSS content that has already been syndicated by someone else, on their website.

There are icons on the starboard bow

Another complication has been the variety of icons used to represent rss. Simple orange (but occasionally blue) rss icons have been popular, but orange xml and rdf icons are also often used to indicate the availability of feeds, and sometimes the version (rss 1.0 or rss 2.0) is specified within the icon. There are even several tools, such as rss icons <<http://rss-icons.com/>> and feedforall <<http://www.feedforall.com/public/rss-graphic-tool.htm>>, which allow the creation of almost limitless variations. On some sites, more than one icon is used, examples being the iop syndication site <<http://syndication.iop.org/>>, which gives the choice of rss 1.0 or rss 2.0 for journal table of contents feeds through two different icons. And also newscientist.com <<http://www.newscientist.com/feeds.ns>>, which offers three variations. There are valid reasons for the provision of

such choice, but the net effect, as with other rss icon variations, is to make things appear more complicated than they actually are.

An orange square with white radio waves has recently become the industry standard for both rss and related formats such as atom, with examples to be found at feed icons <<http://www.feedicons.com/>>, but many sites do not use these, and some even feel a need to customise this icon and add 'rss' to the left.

Information professionals, publishers and webmasters have been quick to create helpful explanations of what all of this means. Directly beside most rss icons (or orange square with white radio waves, or other variations) on websites can be found a link to a 'what is rss?' or 'what is this?' page. A few examples, taken in this instance from journal publishers, are:

- Blackwell Synergy RSS Help <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/help?context=rss_help>
- Emerald Help - RSS Feeds <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/info/help/help_pages/rss_help.jsp>
- RSC's What are RSS feeds and how do I use them? <<http://www.rsc.org/Publishing/Technology/whatisrss.asp>>
- Oxford Journals RSS Web Feeds <<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/help/rss.html>>
- BBC RSS Help (one of the best general examples) <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/3223484.stm>>.

These explanations are all very laudable, but what a duplication of effort, especially as most of these examples give much the same information! Remember, there are thousands upon thousands of such pages. Such information can also become out of date as new ways of using RSS become possible.

A further complication, for the novice RSS user at least, is in the available choice of feed reader. Here are 10:

- Bloglines <<http://www.bloglines.com/>>
- Google Reader <<http://www.google.com/reader/>>
- NewsGator <<http://www.newsgator.com/>>
- RSS Bandit <<http://www.rssbandit.org/>>
- Rojo <<http://www.rojo.com/>>
- Awasu <<http://www.awasu.com/>>
- Newsburst <<http://www.newsburst.com/>>
- FeedHugger <<http://feedhugger.com/>>
- Bloogz <<http://reader.bloogz.com/>>
- FeedBucket <<http://www.feedbucket.com/>>.

Many more are listed by the RSS Compendium

<<http://www.allrss.com/rssreaders.html>>, and in fact, there are so many that they have been broken down by

platform (Ajax, Windows, Mac, Linux/Unix, Cross-Platform, Web-Based, Blackberry, Pocket PC, Mobile Phones, e-mail and Other).

Stay alert, crew

As use of RSS becomes ubiquitous, hopefully such concerns will decrease. Certainly, millions of people are now using RSS in one way or another, but millions more are not. It's the latter group that particularly concerns me, as they may be missing valid opportunities for keeping current.

RSS is being used in new ways. For example feeds are available to monitor changes to any Wikipedia article (via an article's history page through the toolbox link labelled "RSS"). Some search services, such as IceRocket <<http://blogs.icerocket.com/>>, allow searches to be saved as RSS feeds. It also is possible to convert email discussion list outputs to an RSS feed, and there are ways to share calendars via RSS <<http://www.rsscalendar.com/rss/>>.

RSS is therefore being used to deliver a growing number of types of information in addition to the traditional news feed. Other examples include new funding opportunities (eg, COS Funding News <<http://fundingopps.cos.com/news/rss.xml>>), new patents (eg, FreePatentsOnline <<http://freepatentsonline.com/rssfeed.html>>), research announcements (eg, Alphagalileo <<http://www.alphagalileo.org/>>), calls for papers (eg, Inderscience <<http://www.inderscience.com/rss/calls>

<<http://www.inderscience.com/rss/calls.php>>), ePrint repository updates (eg, arXiv.org <<http://arxiv.org/help/rss>> and E-LIS <<http://eprints.rclis.org/last.xml>>), job vacancies (eg, Redgoldfish <http://www.redgoldfish.co.uk/jobs_rs.asp>), and new dissertations and theses updates (eg, ProQuest <<http://www.umi.com/syndication/rss/disstheses.shtml>>).

RSS is increasingly being used by scholarly publishers. When I wrote about journal Tables of Contents (TOCs) by RSS back in FreePint 161 <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/170604.htm#feature>>, there was only a handful of publishers who were producing TOC RSS feeds. Today, there are many, and many thousands of individual feeds. Probably the best and most current list is the Electronic Journals RSS feeds <<http://www.liv.ac.uk/Library/techserv/ejrn/rss.html>>, which is maintained by the University of Liverpool Library. Journal TOC RSS feeds are not only being produced by journal publishers, but also by aggregators such as Atypon <<http://www.atypon-link.com/>>, Ingenta Connect <<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/>> and Zetoc <<http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk/rssjnl/rssjnl.html>>.

In the past, anyone who wanted to be kept informed about such new content needed to get to grips with at least some aspects of RSS. Alternatives are, however, being developed.

One example will result from a new JISC funded project, with which I'm involved, called ticTOCs <<http://www.tictocs.ac.uk>>. TicTOCs is part of the Users & Innovations:

Personalising Technologies (U&I) programme <<http://digbig.com/4tgjin>> and will utilise RSS in order to make the process of keeping up to date with new journal content much easier for academics and researchers.

TicTOCs is developing a directory of journal Table of Contents RSS feeds, and will provide access to this via a user-friendly website which will enable the display of TOCs, plus the exportation and reuse of items within TOCs and also the TOCs themselves. The name 'ticTOCs' comes from the fact that the process will involve the selective 'ticking' of TOCs at appropriate times, and the intention is that it will only take a tick or two to keep up to date.

There will be a great deal more to the service than that brief explanation above allows, including seamless linking from library journals lists directly to individual journal TOCs. One intention of the project I'd like to flag up is to enable all of this to happen without the need for any user to understand the technical or procedural concepts involved in the process. My hopes are actually that we may not even mention 'RSS' at all on the service website, and that ticTOCs will therefore take the jargon, complexities and confusion out of journal TOC RSS aggregation and use.

Several publishers (SAGE, Emerald, Nature Publishing Group, Institute of Physics, Inderscience and ProQuest) are partners in the project. As ticTOCs will facilitate access to journal literature in the period immediately after publication and before an increasing amount of it becomes freely available

from open access repositories, we hope that other publishers will also support the service.

To a great extent, there is little new in the technological solutions to be offered by ticTOCs. For example, many of the functions being developed can currently be performed by existing RSS readers. There are also other tools which allow the aggregation and recombination of feeds, such as afeeda <<http://www.afeeda.com/>> and Yahoo! Pipes <<http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/>>. XFruits <<http://www.xfruits.com/>> provides a number of features, including aggregation of feeds, reuse and conversion to other formats, Feed Digest <<http://www.feeditdigest.com/>> enables feed aggregation and digest creation, and Grazr <<http://www.grazr.com/>> facilitates the display of RSS feeds on other Web pages. The main difference is that ticTOCs will be concerned solely with journal TOC RSS feeds, and that unlike most of the other tools I have mentioned, no knowledge of RSS will be necessary in order to use it.

For those who may want to know more about possible ways to use RSS, an excellent source of information is Marjolein Hoekstra's RSS Tool Vendors <http://dutchisms.typepad.com/rss_to_ol_vendors/>, which is part of the CleverClogs blog <<http://dutchisms.typepad.com/>>. Another source is Phil Bradley's I want to: RSS site <<http://www.philb.com/iwantto/rss.htm>>. For news about ticTOCs, there is a blog <<http://tictocsnews.wordpress.com/>>.

- "RSS: Less Hype, More Action" By Roddy MacLeod
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/170604.htm#feature>>
- "Panorama of Engineering Portals" By Roddy MacLeod
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/060700.htm#tips>>
- FreePint Feeds
<<http://www.freepint.com/feed/>>
- ResourceShelf postings on RSS
<<http://www.resourceshelf.com/index.php?s=RSS>>

Cap'n - the engines are overloading!

Whilst RSS is increasingly enabling the delivery of current content of various kinds and from various places direct to the desktop, it is essentially content provider/publisher-driven push technology, and it can result in the delivery of relatively indiscriminate content which may require further time-consuming human filtering.

This is summed up by an amusing cartoon from bLaugh
<http://b laugh.com/cartoons/070119_finish_your_RSS.gif> that shows a mother sternly telling her young son, 'You can't go outside to play until you've read all your RSS feeds!' It is certainly true that a trickle of feeds can soon turn into a river of feeds, as more and more potentially relevant sources are found and then added to a feed reader. This can subsequently develop into a veritable flood of information.

Naturally, there are some tools and services which can help. MySyndicaat <<http://www.mysyndicaat.com/>> allows not only RSS aggregation, but also filtering, using user-defined rules. Blastfeed <<http://www.blastfeed.com/>> enables filtering of selected feeds, and can notify you of any matching results. There are personalisation tools, such as myFeedz <<http://www.myfeedz.com/>>, which learn from what you like, and commercial services, such as Newstex BlogAlerts <<http://www.museglobal.com/news/press.php?content=2007/20070416.html>>, are being developed to generate personalised alerts drawn from the content of millions of blog feeds.

Much more can, and needs to be done in this area, however, to reduce the likelihood of information overload.

RSS has been around for some time now. At first glance it might seem, like Dr McCoy's view from the bridge of the Enterprise, to represent an alien (life)form, but as we get used to it, we find it is evolving into an increasingly friendly and useful tool, and one which is becoming the lynchpin of current awareness.

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"Knowledge, Information and the Business Process: Revolutionary Thinking or Common Sense?"

Written by Liz Taylor

Reviewed by Michael Gutierrez



Michael Gutierrez is a reference librarian at the University of Delaware Library <<http://www.lib.udel.edu/>> and is currently obtaining his doctorate in Education Technology.

People are often apprehensive about new concepts that are introduced to an organisation, especially when the concepts might change that organisation. Liz Taylor has written an atypical book that discusses how knowledge, both individual and collective, can be managed to affect change within business processes, and how proactive management can achieve realised benefits.

Taylor has worked in the knowledge/information management field for more than eight years, and her expertise is evident. Many organisations, according to Taylor, are still grappling with the knowledge and information concepts. These organisations do not have a comprehensive mechanism to determine the value of these essential components within the business process, or any means of holistic development.

"Knowledge, Information and the Business Process: Revolutionary Thinking or Common Sense?" provides an evaluative measure for the business process, which Taylor believes will allow more informed creations and enhance the development of business processes from a knowledge/information perspective. For Taylor, knowledge and information are the keys to delivering products derived from business processes. All through her book, she provides practical examples and guidance to evaluate the business processes using the framework she developed. In addition, she describes and synthesises the business process for those who are not familiar with it.

Taylor has designed her book to be a practical guide on the implementation of some key concepts and principles. Prior to unveiling the tools and framework, Taylor briefly discusses the current view of knowledge/information management and introduces some related concepts, such as intellectual capital. After taking a more detailed look at key definitions, Taylor describes a protocol for deconstructing the components and activities of the business process from a knowledge/information perspective.

More importantly, she develops a framework to identify 'potential wastage'. Taylor believes her framework will lead to more proactive management, which will be able to address these inefficiencies. She continually underscores, however, that most business processes are dynamic

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and will change with time, and that the framework developed throughout her book can be used for continual evaluation of any type of process.

According to Taylor, the traditional development approach to the business process is to separate the various components and take different projects forward in isolation. Now the reader has a practical framework, which she has developed and others will hopefully implement. Her suggested strategies for the development of intellectual capital and of business processes are primarily geared toward individuals responsible for change and/or effective business processes.

Not being familiar with business processes, I found some of the concepts difficult to grasp. It took me a few re-reads, highlighting markers, pencilled notes and some frustration to get through this book. Overall, it is a slightly difficult book to read, but describing a new process never is easy.

Regardless of my struggles, I believe "Knowledge, Information and the Business Process" provides a framework for work environments to employ to deal with increasing pressures to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Being able to accurately identify the valuable contributions of knowledge and information is vital to the business process. I am certain that, upon the completion of this book, readers will be able to identify the potential assets within an organisation that have not been realised.

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"Calling in the Specialists: Enhancing Your Services with Subcontractors"

By Marcy Phelps



As the company founder and president of Denver-based Phelps Research, Marcy Phelps (mphelps@phelpsrsearch.com) offers professional research and research training services that help her clients assess market and product potential, minimise risk and improve long-term planning. Marcy regularly writes and speaks on a variety of topics, from business and networking skills to finding and evaluating information on the Web. Marcy publishes a free monthly e-mail bulletin, ResearchNOTES, with useful sites and tips for Internet research. To subscribe, go to <<http://www.phelpsrsearch.com/research.html>>. Her blog, Power Networking for Introverts, can be found at <<http://www.IntrovertsCanNetwork.com>>.

In the 21 September 2006 issue of the FreePint Newsletter, I wrote about my experiences working with Udo Hohlfeld, a subcontractor I hired to help me add German-language research to a profile I was compiling on a company headquartered in Germany. Since then, I've tapped the expertise of a number of highly skilled subcontractors, helping me complement my secondary research with telephone research, competitive intelligence and public records searching and retrieval. In every instance, the finished product exceeded my client's expectations and resulted in repeat business.

Adding the skills and expertise of outside researchers is a great way to save time and expand and improve your information centre's products, services and visibility, but it takes planning and preparation to have a successful subcontracting experience. It's important to think ahead of time about when to subcontract, how to go about hiring subcontractors and some best practices for working with them.

When to subcontract

Subcontracting can be used for projects or parts of projects where no internal expertise is needed. The types of research that are typically subcontracted include online database and Web searching, telephone research, manual research, public records (both online and manual) and document delivery.

Generally, there are several situations when you would consider using the services of an outside professional:

- When special skills or resources are needed

Perhaps you need research in another language or the project calls for an international perspective, as I needed when I called in Udo. Sometimes you need information contained in a specialised database, but you can't justify the expense of a subscription. And often, there are certain types of research that are best left to the experts. Patent searching, public records and highly-specialised industries are examples of these areas of expertise.

- When you are short on time

Sometimes your clients have a rush request, or you are managing so many requests that your resources are stretched to their limits. Rather than turning away business, bring in some outside help. And since subcontractors are only there when you need them, it's a great way to manage your workflow. Identify some clearly-defined, routine projects or lower level tasks that don't need to be completed in-house, and you and your staff can focus on more strategic tasks.

- When you need an unbiased, third-party perspective

Maybe a fresh set of eyes will help you identify new avenues for research. Some projects, though, will have better outcomes if they're not done in-house. For example, if your client asks for insights from prospective customers, you will learn much more if an impartial party is conducting the research. In the case of sensitive projects, your

company may not want to reveal that they are doing research. By using subcontractors, it's possible to uncover information without mention of the ultimate client's identity.

Hiring subcontractors

Once you've established a need to bring in an outside researcher, how do you find subcontractors and what do you look for in a subcontractor? Identify possible candidates by tapping into your network. Who do you already know? When you meet other professionals at meetings or conferences, learn about their unique skills and think about how you might work together. If there's a possible match, work on learning more about each other and developing a relationship. You can also turn to associations to make connections. The Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) offers a referral service and an online directory of its members. Look for both at their website <<http://www.aiip.org/>>. The Special Libraries Association <<http://www.sla.org/>>, Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals <<http://www.scip.org/>> and the FreePint community are other possible sources for finding subcontractors.

When you decide to utilise the services of an outside information professional, you want to look for several characteristics in the candidates:

- Special skills or services

Does the potential contractor possess complementary areas of expertise? Ask about access to specialised resources.

What about critical thinking skills? Do they have the ability to understand your goals and objectives and make recommendations for research? Also consider the 'soft skills'. Do they communicate well and get along with colleagues?

- Excellent reputation and commitment to the profession

What do you know about the subcontractor? Check references. Find out how long they have been in business and if they are involved in any professional associations. Being active in the profession indicates whether they adhere to a set of ethical guidelines, take part in regular professional development offerings, and are up-to-date on industry issues and trends.



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- Honours confidentiality and other agreements

Your reputation, and those of your company and information centre, depend on this. The subcontractors you work with should have no problem with signing standard non-disclosure agreements and reasonable contracts. They need to be able to meet deadlines and follow through on other agreed-upon details of the project.

- Availability and flexibility

You want to match your needs with the best person available. If you frequently require fast turnaround time for your projects, make sure the subcontractor can handle rush requests. Are they willing to manage workflow ups and downs, or do they expect a steady stream of work?

Subcontracting best practices

Now that you've identified what projects could benefit from outside expertise and some possible partners to work with, it's important to consider several best practices for making the process as smooth as possible for everyone involved. These best practices will help you in both the planning and implementation stages.

- Planning Improves Outcomes

Anticipate information needs and determine who will pay for any subcontracted work. Is it your information centre or the department that will use the information? Build a strong business case for using subcontractors, and identify and

develop relationships with departments that would benefit from working with subcontractors and who are willing to pay for it. It's much easier to include these services when budgets are created than it is to try to fit it in later.

- Develop And Document A Process For Working With Subcontractors

Maintain a structured approach. Consider fee structures (hourly, project, or retainer) and rates, chain of communication and whether subcontractors will work on-site or off. Also decide whether the subcontractor and their work will be 'invisible' to your client or if they will be a known source. Talk to your vendors to find out if subcontractors can use your database passwords. Create templates and style guides. Once you have worked out the details, put them in writing so the process can be easily modified and replicated.



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- Facilitate Communication Between All Parties

Ongoing, effective communication between all stakeholders is an essential factor in successful subcontracting. Determine who does what ahead of time and take time to discuss deliverable formats, timelines, fees and possible extra charges. Be sure to confirm everything in writing. For longer projects, schedule regular check-ins as appropriate, keeping in mind time and budget. Share goals with and get input from subcontractors. Make sure they know how and when they can reach you. Make the contractor part of your team.

- Expand Your Skills Beyond Research

Working with subcontractors requires management skills. You'll need to expand your knowledge of and expertise in project management, interpersonal skills, communication, negotiation and more. Taking a more strategic approach to needs assessment, resource allocation and product development will make you indispensable to your clients.

Subcontracting research projects to carefully-selected outside information professionals helps you manage work flow and resources, as well as improve and add services. In addition, it has the potential to increase your leadership role within your organisation. Make sure you invest the time and resources for the planning and preparation that are necessary for a successful subcontracting experience.

Related FreePint links:

- "Transcontinental Teamwork: A Collaborative Case Study in Using Multilingual and Multinational Information Resources" By Marcy Phelps and Udo Hohlfeld
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/210906.htm#feature>>
- "SLA Special Report: Your Wish Was Our Command" By Free Pint Limited Staff
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/280607.htm?#feature>>
- "Shopping for an Information Broker: "Please don't squeeze the Charmin"" By Mary Ellen Bates
<<http://www.batesinfo.com/searcher-article.html>>
- "Selective Outsourcing: A Tool for Leveraging the Value of Information Professionals" By Cynthia Lesky
<<http://www.sla.org/pdfs/sla2007/szedlaksecondaryresearch.pdf>>
- "'Co-Sourcing' Secondary Research: Partnerships between Internal Researchers and External Information Brokers for Greater Business Value" By Jennifer Jenkins Szedlak and Camille Clark Wallin
<http://slablogger.typepad.com/Paper_Szedlak.doc>

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"Internet Librarian International 2007 - New Realities, Roles and Resources" 8 - 9 October

With everyone searching the internet in their work, what distinguishes internet librarians from the crowd? The 9th annual Internet Librarian International conference focuses on the new realities, roles and resources within electronic research, illustrating the current upheaval in the work of electronic information professionals around the world and setting out how best to prove your continued value. Internet Librarian International's 2007 conference sessions and parallel Sponsor Showcase exhibition are designed to deliver support, guidance and

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- "Info Ireland 2007" 18 September <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e911>>

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- "Website Usability" 22 - 24 August <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e880>>
- "Intranet Site Visits - Melbourne" 10 - 11 September 2007 <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e884>>
- "Collaboration in the world of Web 2.0" 12 - 13 September <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e899>>

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Gold

A look back at what FreePint covered at this time in previous years:

- FreePint No.210 27th July 2006. "Embracing the Wiki Way: Deploying a Corporate Wiki" and "Job Trends in the Information Market: A Q&A with Hazel Hall" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/270706.htm>>
- FreePint No.187 28th July 2005. "Plain and clear: Resources on Plain English" and "Local Search, The Search Engines and Yellow Pages" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/280705.htm>>
- FreePint No. 164 29th July 2004. "Artificial Intelligence" and "Money Laundering new regulations - implications for information provision" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/290704.htm>>
- FreePint No.141 24th July 2003. "The Psychology of Corporations and Corporate Officers" and "Automotive Industry Sources: What Forest? All I See Are Trees!" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/240703.htm>>
- FreePint No.117, 25th July 2002. "News Agencies on the Web" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/250702.htm>>
- FreePint No.92, 19th July 2001. "Information Architecture and Web Usability Resources" and "Summoned by Bells" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/190701.htm>>
- FreePint No.67, 20th July 2000. "Puppetry and Animation Sources on the Web" and "Web resources for handheld computers" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/200700.htm>>
- FreePint No.43, 22nd July 1999. "Full Text Online?" and "Intranet 'Toolkits' for Integrating Online Services - a world of possibilities" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/220799.htm>>
- FreePint No.19, 23rd July 1998. "Wish You Were Here ... Travel and Tourism Resources on the Web" and "First Amongst Equals" <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/230798.htm>>

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