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Plus ...

Jobs
Discussion
Tips
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FreePint is a global network of people who find, use, manage and share work-related information. Members receive this free twice-monthly newsletter, which is packed with tips, features and resources.

Joining FreePint is free at <<http://www.freepint.com/>> and connects information practitioners around the world with resources, events and answers to their tricky research and information questions at the FreePint Bar, our free online forum: <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>.

The FreePint Newsletter is available online in several formats and can be read, saved and forwarded at <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/>>.

Editorial



Remember the bully at your school? The one who stole your pocket money, tripped you in the corridor and kicked your shins on the football pitch? You'd probably just as soon forget those painful memories, but take some solace from this: people like that don't succeed in the information industry.

When you grapple with a wildly evolving job market and strive to connect with co-workers who might not understand what you do for a living, you can't excel unless you know how to play well with others.

Our authors might not have been thinking of who took their milk money when they contributed to this issue, but each addresses rules from the playground in their articles.

Hazel Hall warns against goal-hanging. As co-author of a study about the 'e-information' job market, she found that while many jobs have emerged to handle new information technology, traditional information professionals don't have them. Why? Because employers aren't offering them to traditional information professionals. They don't know these professionals exist. Our Q&A with Hazel can help you strategise on how to stop being passive and join the game.

Leigh Dodds talks about playground politics as they apply to social networks, specifically corporate wikis. He turns his own experience at setting up a successful wiki at his company into lessons for shaping a knowledge-sharing environment. As he says, "Creating a wiki environment is as much of an exercise in community building as it is in software installation".

And Jela Webb reviews "Ten Steps to Maturity in Knowledge Management: Lessons in Economy", a book that clearly tells you how to have others following you as the leader.

So the next time you flash back to the terror at your school, remember that the person who plays well with others not only collaborates better with colleagues, but also gets the next gig.

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Susan Bradley is the Information Officer for Universities UK and has extensive experience in electronic publishing, knowledge management, library and information services, and records management.

Submit your top five favourite Web sites. See the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>

My Favourite Tipples

by Susan Bradley

Whether navigating bibliographies or travel information, these sites all come in handy:

- My first stop for finding detailed bibliographic data is COPAC <<http://www.copac.ac.uk/>>. It combines the catalogues of UK national and university libraries and is also useful for locating copies of books and journals.
- Amazon.co.uk <<http://www.amazon.co.uk/>>, the Internet bookseller giant, is great for obtaining a discount on publishers' prices as well as checking out bibliographic details.
- Streetmap <<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/>> is a useful resource for finding the location of a UK street or postcode. The maps expand and contract to show from street level to Ordnance Survey map-level detail.
- When I'm looking for the quickest route between two places, I look to ViaMichelin <<http://www.viamichelin.co.uk/>>. It has detailed driving instructions and fairly accurate journey times. It also includes maps and links to nearby tourist sites and car parks.
- Oanda <<http://www.oanda.com/>> is a currency converter handy for those trips abroad or for checking the prices of items on web sites in currencies other than your own.



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Detailed review of Silobreaker in June VIP

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<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5538>>

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FreePint Bar

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Monique Cuvelier serves as editor of the FreePint Newsletter. She has contributed many articles to dozens of publications in the UK and US, CFO, CIO Insight, eCommerce Business, and also written about business and technology for The Western Mail, Wales' national newspaper. She has launched and run several online and print publications. She can be reached at <monique.cuvelier@freepint.com>.

The FreePint Bar is where you can get free help with your tricky research questions <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>

Summer means getting away, and several FreePint Bar members are thinking about travel, from the health hazards of flying to cars crowding the streets. Others are talking about how to manage data and launch a career in the information industry. You can lend your knowledge or learn a thing or two at the Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>

- Anyone can get sick of air travel, but one Bar member is wondering which health risks are actually enough to warrant a trip to the GP. Big repositories of information are the British Travel Health Association and the Aviation Health Institute. Specific conditions, such as deep vein thrombosis, are documented in Medline and EMBASE databases. Read about more reports and citations at <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b49625>>.

- One industry surely tracking air-travel sickness is insurance. But how efficiently are insurance companies run? How do they address such issues as fraud? Each sector is different, to be sure, but FreePinters are offering viewpoints and opinions at <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b49687>>. Add yours.

- Auto insurers could help another Bar member with his question: how many vehicles are on roads in the UK? The answer, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, is above 30 million. Other organisations are also tracking how many people crowd the roads - more at <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b47999>>.

- When dealing with so many facts and figures, using a reliable contact management system is paramount <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b47799>>. Thankfully, there are piles of them available for free. A few members are posting their recommendations and evaluation tools to sort through the offerings.

- If you were looking to study for post-grad qualifications, how would you begin? That's the question one career-changer in the Student Bar is asking <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s8689>>. Offer your anecdotes and advice, or read what others are saying. The free Jinfo newsletter <<http://www.jinfo.com/>> contains a wealth of information about changing careers and credentialing processes.

Thousands of users turn to the FreePint Bar, and FreePint overall, for answers and advice. Tell your colleagues about us by forwarding them this link <<http://www.freepint.com/>>.

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The screenshot shows the Onopoly website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Sponsor, Author, Update, Press, and Contact & Terms. Below this, a 'Network' section lists several member sites with their logos and 'Visit' or 'Sponsor' links. The sites listed are FreePint, researcha, VIP, willco, jinfo, digbig, and ResourceShelf. Each site has a brief description of its content. For example, researcha is described as 'Purchased reports on companies in the UK and 10 European countries.' At the bottom right of the network section, there is a 'Site-relationship diagram (PDF)' link.



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"Embracing the Wiki Way: Deploying a Corporate Wiki"

By Leigh Dodds



Leigh Dodds is the Engineering Manager for the IngentaConnect web site, a large aggregation of academic research content. Leigh is experienced with developing with Java, XML and Semantic Web technologies, and has also contributed code and documentation to several open-source projects.

As a freelance author Leigh has also contributed articles and tutorials to sites including IBM developerWorks and XML.com. Leigh has presented papers at several technical conferences, and has acted as technical reviewer for a number of books covering core XML technologies. He recently contributed to the O'Reilly book, XML Hacks.

His personal web site is at <http://www.ldodds.com/>.

Wikis, currently one of the biggest buzzwords in online publishing, helped solve a problem for my company, Ingenta. We needed to share information between the research and engineering departments, and we needed a simple tool to manage our rapidly growing set of references on key research initiatives and topics relevant to Ingenta's core business area: offering technology services to academic publishers. I had created a wiki for myself to support my research and development role back then, and it seemed natural to expand it into an intranet alternative that allowed Ingenta's users to edit and contribute to content collectively.

Now, four years later, Ingenta's wiki is extremely popular. It has grown from one department to the entire company. We have even created wikis to interact with our clients as an easy means of sharing information.

Many companies are exploring the use of wiki environments, pressing them into service behind the firewall as a way to capture knowledge and improve communications within a business. Creating successful social software systems isn't an exact science. Case studies and experience reports provide essential background when considering the success factors.

Deploying a wiki involves more than just selecting and installing an appropriate software package. They're quite different beasts to the typical enterprise groupware or intranet application. They eschew rigid notions of hierarchy and permissions, letting users quickly create and shape a knowledge-sharing environment that supports them. Wikis are social software. Creating a wiki environment is as much of an exercise in community building as it is in software installation.

With this in mind, the first section of this article outlines how I introduced the Ingenta wiki. My aim is to present some tips to help other organisations deploy a corporate wiki, and to give them advice on creating a wiki culture.

Establishing need: the Ingenta corporate wiki

Having undergone rapid growth through several acquisitions and a major re-engineering project that resulted in a new platform for our core products, Ingenta needed a way to quickly capture and share knowledge. Turnover of contract staff necessitated a good knowledge-capture environment. The infrastructure to support these needs had not grown as rapidly as the company itself. Information was often in silos created by various teams using different tools and technologies. Grand visions for a corporate groupware solution were still on the horizon, but the engineering department needed something more immediate.

The idea of a wiki environment especially for the engineering team was natural. Already comfortable with web-based environments, they were also capable of installing and maintaining their own wiki. But while their ability to quickly learn the wiki functionality certainly contributed to the rapid success of the experiment, the more critical issue was that the wiki met immediate needs.

The environment worked well across increasingly distributed teams. The barrier to entry to contribute to the wiki is very low; documentation could be added and maintained very easily. Finally, the team already had a need to pass documentation around for review and sign-off. Requesting and incorporating changes became much easier as the wiki captured discussions directly rather than being lost in email. Reviewers could correct text and check revisions using the wiki change history.

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Expanding the experiment

The wiki became a formal part of the engineering process after its initial success. All deliverables are now authored directly as wiki pages. Engineers use wiki pages to list current work priorities and capture the requirements for each project and incorporate release and testing documentation. The wiki also links to other internal tools and information sources. For example, release documentation links directly to our web-based bug-tracking system.

The initial growth of the wiki was almost viral. With little evangelism, the tool gradually expanded its user base to the rest of the company. It became natural for other departments, such as product management, to begin using the wiki. Users required little training to get started, since writing a wiki is as easy as writing an email. They also increasingly used the wiki as a daily resource, as the content was already closely aligned to many existing business processes.

Knitting together other sources of information using the wiki proved simple. For example, our shared network folders are web accessible, as are a number of disparate tools and documentation. It was easy to create an intranet page in the wiki and link to these resources, creating a simple resource directory.

Today the wiki is actively used by every department, with the exception of finance. Perhaps I can tempt them away from their spreadsheets with wikiCalc
<<http://www.softwaregarden.com/wkcalpha/>>! A reasonable number of users actively contribute new content and update existing documentation, while a larger group of users simply use it as a reference resource.

We're now evaluating whether we've outgrown our current wiki platform and are looking at possible alternatives.

Choose your wiki

The obvious first step is to select some wiki software to use. The two biggest features I consider essential in a wiki are version

tracking and search. Strong search facilities become particularly important once your wiki reaches a certain size.

In all, there's a huge number of different implementations
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki_software/> to choose from. These range from simple no-frills versions to complete content-management systems. We opted for JSPWiki
<<http://www.jspwiki.org/>>, as it meshed well with our existing technology platform. Another popular wiki is MediaWiki
<<http://mediawiki.org/>>, which currently supports the Wikipedia sites and has an active user community.

There is also an increasing range of enterprise wikis such as Socialtext
<<http://www.socialtext.com/>>, Confluence
<<http://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence/>> and JotSpot
<<http://www.jot.com/>>. Each offers a good range of features and commercial support options. You'll need to take time to evaluate and experiment with a few different options. Migration between platforms isn't always easy, as many wikis differ in features and syntax.

Build your community

Next you need to start building your wiki community. Start small. Focus on one or two teams initially. The wiki will need shepherding through its infancy, so nominate someone as a champion to help train staff members and guide them on how to get the best from the environment.

The best training exercise is to simply encourage users to wade in and start writing pages. We initially promoted a 'sandbox', or personal homepage, as a safe environment to play with wiki editing. More recently we've been encouraging new joiners to create their initial wiki page as part of their induction. This gives them familiarity with the tool from day one.

You'll find that many users don't always feel comfortable with editing existing content. Using a sandbox lets them build confidence before embarking on contributing to the main content.

One technique to introduce users to aspects of the wiki syntax and subtly encourage the view that the wiki is a shared environment is to edit someone's homepage yourself. For example, I might tweak the page to make their email address a hyperlink, or just improve the display of their personal information. Letting them know that anyone can freely edit and tidy the information in a wiki is the most important point for users to grasp. It's also the one that takes the longest to learn.

Stay relevant

Attempt to find or suggest ways for your initial community to usefully apply the wiki. Ensuring that the wiki meets a need and has relevant content will encourage sustained usage. Here are a few of the different ways that I've observed the wiki being used at Ingenta:

- As a user directory. Most of our staff have a personal homepage including their contact details and current assignments
- As a personal notebook to capture to-do lists or useful personal notes
- For recording minutes of meetings. Rather than write up and circulate meeting notes by email, we often now make notes directly into the wiki
- Managing information on clients, both current and prospective
- Brainstorming new product features
- Publishing documentation for both internal users and external clients
- Capturing technical documentation on our products and services
- Creating glossaries of terms. Every company and industry has jargon; we often define terms as separate pages in the wiki, enabling links to be added to documentation for clarification.

Avoid attachments

Some die-hard users insist they can't possibly live without a word processor and say that a means to attach Word

documents or spreadsheets to wiki pages is an essential requirement. Attachments are a useful feature for attaching diagrams or additional documentation to a page, but you should discourage overuse of attachments. If the useful content is in an attachment, then it's not in the wiki and not easily editable. That's not the wiki way.

Lay down pathways

Initially, we divided our wiki into people and projects. Pages were also introduced for teams and departments. These pages provided a basic organizing principle that became the primary means of navigating through the wiki. A similar structure would work in any corporate wiki.

However, these initial pathways provide more than just navigation. A wiki grows by people adding new links and pages to existing content. Your initial structure provides a cue as to where new content could or should be added. By introducing this structure from the start, you'll help avoid the wiki deteriorating into a morass of interlinked pages.

As your wiki grows you'll need to continue to organize it to reflect the needs of users and the growing body of content.

Employ a gardener

'Wiki gardening' <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiGardener>> is a phrase used to describe tending a wiki to ensure that it stays fresh and remains navigable. Your wiki will need a gardener. During the early stages of deployment, you'll manage with just a single 'WikiMaster'. His or her role will be to lay down some of the initial pathways, tidy up pages and ensure content stays relevant. As the wiki grows, this role will become more than a one-person job. At Ingenta a number of my colleagues quickly embraced the wiki and became good WikiCitizens <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiCitizen>>.

Typical wiki gardening tasks include:

- Tidying up and re-formatting pages to ensure they're readable

- Helping ensure content is up-to-date
- Checking for orphaned pages that aren't usefully connected into the main web of pages
- Breaking up long pages into smaller more manageable and useful chunks
- Identifying useful content to be contributed
- Promoting the wiki within their own department or team
- Renaming pages to better reflect their contents.

Ideally, your wiki gardeners will emerge naturally, but you can actively recruit them from individual departments. The idea isn't to delegate maintaining the wiki to a small team of users; it's more about community building. It's essential for the user community to take ownership for their own content, and, most importantly, for other people's content. This is one important difference between a wiki and traditional groupware.

Naming is everything

Naming is important in a wiki. Try to encourage good naming or navigation will suffer. Page names should reflect their content. Avoid use of abbreviations, acronyms, etc. Wikis work very well with CamelCaseNamesLikeThis. All wiki installations will automatically generate links from CamelCase words to the appropriately named page in the wiki.

With good naming you can write sentences like the following, and they will not only be readable, but also magically gain links to the relevant documentation:

When `ConfiguringTheServer` don't forget to `DeployTheWidget`; if you need a reference read `HowToStartTheApplication`.



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Or, perhaps:

We're maintaining a list of `CurrentClients` and `CurrentCompetitors`. Delivery dates for `ForthcomingProducts` can be found in the `ReleaseSchedule`.

Naming conventions are also a good way to indicate that pages are related in some way. For example we often use a project's name as a prefix for pages, e.g. `ProjectNameOverview` and `ProjectNameReleases`, or for user specific pages: `LeighDoddsCalendar`.

Avoiding a wiki explosion

If your wiki starts to become successful and other departments or teams embrace it, you may find yourself faced with a request that users need a wiki for their department only. Just say no!

If you create many small wikis then you inevitably recreate the kind of content silos

that you're undoubtedly trying to replace. Provide guidance on how users can create pages targeted for their own department, perhaps adopting a naming convention as outlined above. Explain that this will be less effective than a single inter-linked knowledge base. For example the content will not be cross-searchable.

Wherever we've deployed smaller per-department or per-team wikis they've rapidly grown stale. Either because there wasn't enough content, or that users were already contributing to another wiki and naturally continued to add content there. In almost all cases we've ended up shutting them down.

The only occasion I've found when a separate wiki is not only useful but essential is when it's shared with people outside the firewall. We've used a wiki at Ingenta as a way to share documentation with clients. It wouldn't be appropriate for clients to have access to our main corporate wiki, so a separate installation works better.

Within an organisation, ensuring people share information requires extra work - anywhere from 30 minutes to a whole day. But I know I'm not the only one keeping an interested eye on the RecentChanges page on our wiki to see what's happening elsewhere in the company.

Hopefully this article has provided some useful pointers that will help you explore the potential of your own corporate wiki. I've found it fascinating to see how a wiki environment can facilitate sharing and contribution amongst teams, as well as providing a low-cost and simple way of capturing knowledge within an organisation.

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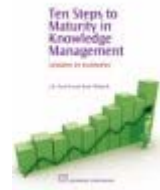
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"Ten Steps to Maturity in Knowledge Management: Lessons in Economy"

Written by JK Suresh and Kavi Mahesh

Reviewed by Jela Webb



Jela Webb, via her business, Azione Consulting, is a freelance strategic advisor, consultant and trainer in information and knowledge management, working with private and public sector clients. An associate of Ashridge, Learnership and TFPL, she has implemented KM programmes in FTSE 100 companies and has a particular interest in how best to manage and motivate knowledge workers.

She is also a Visiting University and Business School Lecturer and presents at KM conferences. As a writer, Jela has contributed articles to FreePint, to leading KM journals and is currently writing a comprehensive report examining the use of KM tools and techniques to support organisations to manage risk more effectively.

JK Suresh and Kavi Mahesh have been involved in implementing Knowledge Management (KM) at Infosys Technologies Ltd., an organisation recognised publicly for its achievements at the global MAKE (Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises) awards. Their practical experience gives them credibility - the book includes a case study of how KM was implemented in Infosys.

Lessons in the text are based on their own experiences as well as the work of their global network of associates. They aim to share information with practitioners seeking to implement a KM solution in their own organisation. Those wishing to gain an understanding of the practicalities of KM implementation and how it evolves from a blueprint stage to full maturity will also find a use for this book.

The main theme is that KM should be regarded as a journey; there are no quick and easy solutions. A KM programme is a significant change, which presents its own challenges and opportunities. The authors promote the idea that each organisation is different and that a one-size-fits-all solution does not work when it comes to KM. Different IT systems, company cultures and reward systems for employees get in the way.

These complexities are explained through lessons in the book's five parts, which take the reader from initial inception to final delivery of an initiative. Some chapters include useful additional references for those who want to research in more depth.

Throughout, the emphasis is on giving guidelines that demonstrate how to implement the ideas. Here's an example of what you may expect:

Guidelines for garnering support for a KM initiative:

1. Start with a small scope and expand the scope incrementally to cover the entire organisation.
2. Get the support of a local, congenial group for the initial scope.

3. Get support from enabling functions such as quality, education and research.

4. At the same time, nurture the involvement and support of top management and use their powers judiciously when needed to buy in a constituency. A steering committee of top managers for guiding KM strategy could be constituted.

5. Demonstrate the value of KM using the outcome of each step to garner further support.

6. Seek voluntary participation in KM; do not mandate. For example a message from the CEO saying 'you better do KM' could be counterproductive.

7. Finally, alternate between carrots and sticks cautiously, i.e. show potential benefits of KM for particular roles and teams, provide incentives at times and, at other times when necessary, dictate terms and enforce changes.

The guidelines are helpful, but sometimes I found myself asking, "HOW do you do that?". Take starting with a small scope, how do you choose where to concentrate your initial efforts? I advise my clients to pick an area where they will be certain to get some quick wins, and/or where they can learn lessons for wider organisational dissemination. This type of extra guidance would be helpful.

As an experienced practitioner, I consider these guidelines to be full of common sense. It is clear that the authors have given much thought, not only to their own experiences, but also what other practitioners have shared with them in terms of KM successes.

This is a very practical guide. Take from it the lessons that you need and apply them appropriately to help you on your own KM journey.

"Job Trends in the Information Market: A Q&A with Hazel Hall"



Dr Hazel Hall is Senior Lecturer in the School of Computing at Napier University, Edinburgh where she teaches modules on knowledge management, business information sources, and information delivery at undergraduate and postgraduate level. As well as holding a doctorate and a Master's degree in Information Management, Hazel's background includes qualifications in French and Italian language and literature from the Universities of Birmingham, Nantes and Paris Sorbonne. Hazel spent the second half of academic year 2005/6 working with TFPL <<http://www.tfpl.com/>>, supported by a grant awarded by the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Anyone working in the information industry knows jobs are constantly changing to keep up with the technology. TFPL, Ltd., which provides recruitment, training and advisory services to the sector, recently commissioned a report on the 'e-information' job market, which spans many disciplines not generally associated with traditional information roles.

Hazel Hall, senior lecturer in the School of Computing at Napier University, Edinburgh, and associate advisor at TFPL, was a member of the research team. This month she presented the preliminary findings at a meeting of the Industrial and Commercial Librarians Group (ICLG) at the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). FreePint asked Hall about what went into the study and what TFPL discovered about new employment opportunities.

FreePint (FP): What prompted this research project? Did TFPL approach you, or was it something you proposed with the collaborative team?

Hazel Hall (HH): The initial idea for the research came from TFPL, stimulated by a number of trends in the information market. For example, as technology became the norm for handling and exploiting information, many new and interesting roles emerged. These could have been filled by information professionals, but often people from other disciplines occupy these posts. It isn't that IP [information professional] candidates lose the contest for the posts. It is generally because the profession is not on the employer's radar, or that IP skills are not seen as relevant.

TFPL is also convinced that there is a significant blurring of boundaries between disciplines, and this affects the education and personal development needs of IPs.

The IP/IT boundary is already porous and the synergies are now far more obvious than the conflict. However, other disciplines, such as human resources, communications, organisational design, etc., are increasingly becoming significant in the development of effective information management.

And, finally, the e-world is developing and changing so rapidly that it is difficult to maintain an in-depth understanding of the scope of e-information roles. TFPL wanted to create a picture of this world, and had decided to undertake some research to underpin an 'e-information roles framework'.

When we learnt that I had been awarded a secondment grant from the Royal Academy of Engineering, TFPL saw an opportunity to involve me in the research as an experienced academic researcher. The original project aims were expanded to accommodate a series of new ones of particular relevance to higher education, such as to uncover real evidence that can be used to generate higher interest in IM and KM as attractive domains of study and employment.

FP: How did you go about gathering the information for the study? How long did it take?

HH: We collected six sets of data for the study. These included data collected from:

1. Desk research - advertised job data (internal placements offered through TFPL in the period September 2004 to March 2006, plus a range of roles advertised in other sources in March 2006)
2. Internal consultations with TFPL advisors, recruitment staff and one of the TFPL networking groups

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3. A web-based survey targeted at a sample of people to include 'traditional' information specialists and other industry stakeholders

4. Interviews with a subset of survey respondents

5. A focus group held in Glasgow

6. A feedback seminar held in London to discuss findings that were beginning to emerge from the data collected in the other five exercises.

The survey gave us some very useful quantitative data which helped pinpoint some trends, and input from the interviews and consultative groups proved invaluable in helping steer the research initially and later in adding context and insight to the survey data.

We collected the data between the beginning of March and mid-June 2006, so it took three and a half months.

FP: In an evolving field, it's sometimes difficult to know how to even frame the questions for research because we don't yet have a shared vocabulary for the field, let alone benchmarks. How did you begin to create the terms of the study? Did you find that your questions shifted as you got more involved with the project? Were there areas of study you had to abandon or rethink along the way?

HH: We spent quite a lot of time working out how to limit the scope of the study, and the internal consultations were very helpful with this. We agreed that the TFPL definition of an e-information role as "a role which is directly related to the development and application of those processes which facilitate the creation, acquisition, capture, organisation, security, flow and sharing of electronic information

AND comprise a significant element (50 per cent+) of knowledge or information management in their responsibility". We needed to be careful with this definition or we would open ourselves up to considering a large part of the labour market, including pure IT roles or business roles that require high information use - such as software engineers and insurance brokers - as well as any roles which involve handling information, such as call centre operators and data entry clerks.

We also felt that our focus should be on role function, rather than skills, although, inevitably, we were interested in skills to a certain extent. We would have liked to have looked more closely at the levels of the roles identified by respondents to our web-based survey, but feedback from the pilot revealed that this added a level of complexity that would probably not be tolerated by respondents. As it was, we felt that we were asking a lot of the people we approached to fill in the questionnaire and provide examples of e-information roles and their main function in their organisations.

As with all work of this nature, we would have liked to involve more people - we had the input of about 120 all together - and it would have been good to have a stronger representation of some industry sectors. For example, we felt that education was under-represented in our study.

FP: Your research summary indicates that e-information represents a tremendous opportunity, with some barriers to realising that opportunity. Both traditional and non-traditional information professionals clearly have a lot to learn from each other along the way. What do you think traditional information professionals uniquely bring to e-information roles? What new skills and ways of thinking/working might they need to develop? How might they create collaborative opportunities?

HH: It is a unique blend of skills (rather than the skills per se) that IPs bring to these roles, e.g. IM skills, understanding of context and the environment, ways of thinking. This is reflected to an extent in the research results in that IM skills are seen as core, but heavily linked to business and - to a lesser extent - computing skills. Part of the TFPL rationale for the project was that while people from other disciplines end up in IM roles and are effective, many are not. This is because they lack the IM way of thinking. (CILIP's body of knowledge document has more to say about what is unique about the profession).

As far as new skills are concerned, the TFPL research results tell us that core IM skills, particularly those related to building information architectures and managing electronic information content, are most in demand. Thereafter general IT literacy and personal attributes such as flexibility, confidence and enthusiasm are important. We spotted an interesting pattern of preferences for skills sets across the two main sectors of survey respondents: private sector respondents appeared to indicate that they are more interested in individuals who are all-rounders than the public and voluntary sector respondents.

Our research results do not indicate how collaborative opportunities may be created. However, other TFPL work suggests that multi-disciplinary team working is a powerful way of developing skills and opportunities. In fact any opportunity to work across disciplines builds opportunities for collaboration.

FP: You say 'new technologies' are driving job opportunities, but can you talk about what these new technologies are?

HH: We didn't collect data on specific technologies but instead asked survey respondents to rate the importance of



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particular drivers, and collected data from other sources on why technology may be considered a driver. So, new technology was most frequently rated as 'important' by the respondents. There are various reasons why it is a strong driver: because there are new information-intensive professions that need support in handling electronic data; because new tasks related to the handling of electronic information have emerged in established jobs; because work previously regarded as specialist has been brought in-house, e.g. high-quality document production. One set of technologies did attract frequent mention in the study. These were social computing technologies such as blogs and wikis.

FP: Has your research dimensionalised the potential e-information workforce, in terms of numbers, salary ranges, geographies, industries? What can an individual do to quantify and qualify e-information opportunities in his or her region or field?

HH: No the time available meant that we haven't considered these issues -- but if FreePint would like to fund such a study we would be happy to do so!

As far as individuals interested in developing careers in e-information work are concerned the TFPL research results would indicate that they should: seek out job opportunities across a range of media; look beyond job titles to identify e-information role opportunity; recognise that there is competition for jobs from others with 'non-traditional' information backgrounds. In preparation for job changes they need to: keep up to date with 'hot topics' of concern to target employers (for example, we found that public and voluntary sector respondents to our survey were preoccupied with government targets, whereas private sector organisation seemed to be more concerned with new technology); develop desirable skills sets (as mentioned earlier) and provide clear demonstrations of their suitability for advertised posts in their job applications.

FP: The 'conclusion' of any study often suggests the next possible routes for research and analysis. What's the next layer of research for e-information? What insights from the study suggest next steps for further understanding the field?

HH: TFPL is currently developing a generic framework of current and emerging e-information roles, which then can be developed for certain sectors.

We will also be making further presentations on this work at the ASIST conference in Texas in November, and possibly at Online 2006. (The abstract is currently under review.)

Although we have been able to predict the job functions where there is most likely to be employment growth, we have not been able to do an analysis by sector, other than to say that there appear to be more opportunities in the public and voluntary sectors. A development of this work would be to deliberately target particular sectors



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with the goal of identifying which offered the greatest opportunities.

More information on the study can be found at <<http://www.tfpl.com/>>.

TFPL is a Jinfo agency; search TFPL jobs across a range of e-information and traditional needs, in the Jinfo database: <<http://www.Jinfo.com/>>

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- FreePint No.164 29th July 2004. "Artificial Intelligence" and "Money Laundering new regulations - implications for information provision"
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