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Editorial

You know it's nearly Christmas when two things happen. One, the Christmas trees and lights are bolted to the outside of our new offices by the local chamber of commerce (they look very nice actually). And two, it's the unmissable Online Information conference and exhibition at Olympia here in London next week.

We're really looking forward to our regular catch-up with Free Pint members on our stand, where there will be discount vouchers and plenty of freebies. These include thousands of the newly designed Free Pint beer mats, and some useful gifts from Free Pint Bar sponsors Factiva. Thank you to them as always for their invaluable support.

We'll also be chairing a number of "Information Masterclasses" with search supremo Gary Price. So, it's looking like it's going to be another great show and conference, especially with the move to the larger 'Grand Hall' at Olympia. We really hope you can come as there will be plenty going on. Find out all about it and get your free exhibition tickets at <http://www.online-information.co.uk/>.

Among other things, we'll be promoting the recently launched UK company director reports at the show. These are proving extremely popular and are a great supplement to the company reports we've been selling for a while. If you want to find out all about a UK company director (such as their address, birth date, and details of all live and resigned directorships with basic financial information for each company) then try a free search now

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

A regular search request at the Free Pint Bar is where to find free photos on the Web to enhance reports and presentations. Today's tips article brings you a range of resources. In today's feature, Martin White talks about communities of practice. In a way, the Free Pint Bar and Bar Digest (now sent to 7,000 people three times a week) could be called a community of practice. Members help each other find the best information resources in response to requests for research assistance.

I really value your feedback on today's issue, either directly by email to me or publicly at the Bar. Do pop by and say hello if you're at the show next week, and pass this edition on to your colleagues.

Best regards
William Hann
Founder and Managing Editor

Email: william@freepint.com
Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044

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ONLINE VERSION WITH ACTIVATED HYPERLINKS

[http://www.freepint.com/
issues/291101.htm](http://www.freepint.com/issues/291101.htm)

ADOBE ACROBAT VERSION WITH NEWSLETTER FORMATTING

[http://www.freepint.com/
issues/291101.pdf](http://www.freepint.com/issues/291101.pdf)

About Free Pint

Free Pint is an online community of information researchers. Members receive this free newsletter every two weeks packed with tips on finding quality and reliable business information on the Internet.

Joining is free at <http://www.freepint.com/> and provides access to the substantial archive of articles, book reviews, jobs, industry news & events, with answers to your research questions and networking at the Free Pint Bars. Free Pint Regulars (paid-up members) also receive a weekly current awareness newsletter, discounts and publicity. Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out.

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

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Combining the latest editions of over 80 of the United Kingdom's leading reference publications gives users of KnowUK unparalleled insight into the people, places, organisations and institutions of the United Kingdom. KnowUK covers every subject pertinent to life in the UK, including healthcare, education, community, travel and heritage. For more information, visit <http://www.knowuk.co.uk/>

[pq1011]

Not Having Any Luck Filling Your Information Vacancy?

Free Pint Jobs is a proven way to fill any information-related vacancy quickly and cost effectively. Is there a bigger information network you can use to promote your job?
<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

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>>]

Until now, it's only been possible to browse the Directory of Regulars by one letter of the alphabet at a time. On the request of a Regular, we've now made it possible to view the entire list of Regulars by surname, or the full list of organisations they work for. See the announcement at <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b14243>>.

We're really keen to keep enhancing the Directory of Regulars to give you even better promotional coverage. Therefore, if you have a suggestion of how to enhance it and make it more widely known and used then please do let me know. A current example is where we link to your Directory entry from any Bar postings you make. Have you any other ideas? <<http://www.freepint.com/portal/regulars>>

All Regulars should now have received their pack of goodies through the post and we hope you find them useful. Don't forget to use your Voucher Code when you get your colleagues to sign

Free Pint Gold

This time last year we looked at rail industry sites (very topical at the time) and had a resource-packed article on film sites.

- Free Pint No.76, 30th November 2000 "Britain's Railway Industry Web Sites" and "Web Sources for Film and Television Information". <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/301100.htm>>

In Free Pint two years ago there was a unique look at the range of UK welfare sites available. Although we then covered a range of residential property sales sites, I wonder how many are still thriving in today's dot-com and economic downturn climate.

- Free Pint No.51, 2nd December 1999 "UK Help and Welfare Information on the Web" and "Homepages: Househunting on the Internet". <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/021299.htm>>

up as a Regular - they'll get a bonus free month, and so will you.

William Hann, Managing Editor
<william@freepint.com>

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

My Favourite Tipples from Sam Vaknin

- <<http://www.bookcrossing.com/>> - Members register their books, obtain a BCID (BookCrossing ID Number) and then give the book to someone, or simply leave it lying around for a stranger to find.
- <<http://www.realsci.com/>> - Having (freely) registered as a member, a scientist or a scholar can publish their papers, essays, research results, articles and comments online.
- <<http://www.plagiarism.org/>> and <<http://www.turnitin.com>> - A statistics-based technology which creates a "digital fingerprint" of every document in its database. An instructor, teacher, or professor can then use the report to prove plagiarism and cheating.
- <<http://www.doi.org/>> - An

Three years ago we ran one of the most popular Free Pint articles ever on business case studies. If you're attending next week's Online Information show then you really should read the preview to 1998's event by show director Katherine Allen to get the most out of it.

- Free Pint No.27, 26th November 1998 "Business Management Case Studies" and "Online Information 98 Preview". <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/261198.htm>>

Free Pint Fact

The location of Free Pint's new offices has been described by some as 'convenient'. For instance, within a five mile radius you can get to the M25, M3 and M4 motorways and Heathrow Airport. Oh, and also the river Thames. There's also a direct 30 minute train to central London, and we're right outside the station.

Car, plane or train. Three convenient opportunities for daily delay and commuter congestion. That's why we now canoe to work on the Thames.

exciting digital content numbering and classification system. The interesting feature of the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) system is its ability to resolve to multiple locations and media (URL's, or data, or content).

- <<http://www.ideavirus.com>> - In Seth Godin's words: "Marketing by interrupting people isn't cost-effective anymore. Instead ... ignite consumer networks and then get out of the way and let them talk."

Sam Vaknin is an economic and political columnist and a published and awarded author of short fiction and reference books. He is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". <<http://www.geocities.com/vaksam/>>

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

Four years ago, I talked about how to use CAPITALISATION in search engines, and when to avoid it. We also talked about how to spot a scam on the Web, and how to ensure your online purchases are secure.

- Free Pint No.2, 20th November 1997 "CAPITAL Punishment in Search Engines" and "Fakes and Frauds on the Net". <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/201197.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>

HAVE YOU REGISTERED? Meet hundreds of content providers, publishers, solutions vendors. Exploit professional know-how in free expertseminars. Find more new ideas in one day at the show than in weeks of fact finding at the office!

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

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/291101.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>>]

One of the primary aims of the Free Pint Bar is to be a place where people can start looking for good online resources and I'm glad to see it's been doing a pretty good job of that. Those looking for biographies (14205), patents (14068), news feeds (14026), pharmaceutical data (14014) and articles (13950, 13948) have all received a generous response.

In addition to this, I reviewed a site on European financial data (14091) and a periodical historical atlas of Europe (14292). And a Free Pinter has posted up a notice about her recently launched site on global trade, aimed especially at small businesses (14279). I've noticed quite a number of postings on this subject and I'm sure you'll find this site useful.

The Bar is also good for the various questions that arise in day to day business, about writing legal disclaimers without the need for a lawyer (14270), targeting and email marketing (14095), Austrian company data (14001), bank details (13955, 13986) and writing tenders (14253). Then there are things like production processes (14126), sales data by country (14081), specific types of company (13954) and registered company information (14130).

Some of these business questions have been about financial matters. People have been looking for a list of investment analysts (14120), details of recently launched incubators and investment trusts (14169), financial data on libraries and information centres (14058), UK mortgage rate trends (13975) and the meaning of the term ISS in relation to investment banking (13934).

And it's an ideal place to ask for pointers when you are researching something online. Free Pinters have been researching the role of utility companies in development and regeneration (14139), machine readable cataloguing (14176), the European mushroom industry (14125) and the evolution of Quality Management Systems or QMSs (14037).

Others have been researching news alerts by text message or SMS (14180), routing public enquiries to the right staff (14035), evaluating research articles (13976), companies using AS/400s (14254) and the number of murder cases that have gone to trial where no body has been found (14154).

Being an online resource, the Bar is especially useful for technical questions. There are bound to be tipplers who know about memory problems (14098), multimedia applications (14104), email problems (14050, 14002), training needs analysis software (13985), Web acceleration software (14009), alternatives to Gator (14011) and unified access to a number of different databases (14211).

And the list goes on. People have been asking about alternative notable dates for MS Outlook (14200), library cataloguing software (14290), library automation systems (14192), VCP/monitor combis (13957), mass document conversion from Lotus AmiPro to WordPro (14022), email notification of site changes (14113) and keyword generators for assisting with Web searches (14021).

Job searchers have been asking about working online (14032, 14117) and others have been looking for job profiles for a "knowledge steward" and "content manager" (14239), contact details relating to setting up an online employment advice service (14084), statistical data on director level recruitment in the UK (14087) and the numbers of certain types of professional working in London and the South East (14006).

Sometimes issues can outstay their welcome in the Bar and I think that is now the case for the one about Women Empowering Women and related Multi Level Marketing schemes (14100). If people are interested in such things they should research them as they wish, but the present exchange of views is unlikely to be of interest to many Free Pinters.

I think the same can be said for the Nigerian Bank con and related scams (14202, 14304). Aside from the fact that this one's been around for several years, I have only recently reviewed a site where you can check such things up .

Other miscellaneous issues have been about gaining first aid qualifications (14206), Latin phrases (14137, 13974), assessing risk (14128), comic songs (14119), the role of Jews in Victorian literature (14112) and questionnaire response rates (13939). What more could one ask of a Bar?

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>>]

In the Free Pint Student Bar people have been researching the chemical elements in the human body (1992), the WiseNut search engine (2004), Dialog (2012), Orwell on totalitarianism (2015) and reference materials for the study of history (1987).

They have also been looking into one of Virginia Woolf's essays (1988), competitive intelligence in the UK (2011), knowledge management ethics (2022), the relative merits of different kinds of graduate degree (2006), free accounting and financial case studies (2010) and market entry strategies for South East Asian countries (2020).

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

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

**Pub Crawl = Publication Crawl =
Current Awareness**

Every week we scan the Web sites of many information and Internet publications for free full text articles of interest to the Free Pint readership. We summarise each article and publish the results as the "Free Pint Pub Crawl" newsletter.

If you don't have time to keep an eye on the trade press, then allow us to do it for you. Sign up today at:
<<http://www.freepint.com/regular>>

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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>

[fa1013]

Free Pint Jobs

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

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

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Researcher

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

Exciting opportunity to provide synthesis & interpretation of branding & media analysis data for international media company.
Recruiter: Recruit Media Limited

Research/Library Services

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1473>

We are seeking experienced Research/Library Services specialists for various legal sector clients seeking to recruit early 2002.
Recruiter: R&B Group

Information Officer

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1497>

Top Reigate based Management Consultancy seeks candidate with 1-2 years previous Business Info. Research experience (Lexis-Nexis, RBB, etc.).
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Information Professionals

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1474>

We are seeking experienced information professionals to work in a variety of industry sectors.
Recruiter: R&B Group

Information Analyst

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j1492>

Financial Information Analyst required for Top-5 firm, using KM skills to collate, analyse and update corporate information.
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment and Services Limited

[The above jobs are paid listings]

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Events

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

The big event next week of course is the Online Information Conference and Exhibition at Olympia in London and we would urge you to come along. Full details and free exhibition tickets are available at <http://www.online-information.co.uk/>.

The City Information Group have their Christmas party in London at the beginning of the month. This is followed by the last ever Institute of Information Scientists Christmas party before they merge with the Library Association.

Staying in the UK, the World Trade Group have their third annual "European Supply Chain summit" in Birmingham, and Pira International are running the "Cross Media Production and Workflows for Publishers and Printers" conference in Leatherhead.

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

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

Researching Unincorporated UK Entities? Easy!

Free Pint's UK company research service has details of over two million unincorporated organisations.

Just tick the "Unincorporated" box when doing a free search: <http://www.freepint.com/icc>

Contact Information

Address:

Free Pint Limited
4-6 Station Approach
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 2QN, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044
Fax: +44 (0)1784 420033

Directions and maps:

<http://www.freepint.com/contact.htm>

Key contacts:

William Hann, Founder and Managing Editor
<william@freepint.com>
Rex Cooke, Editor <rex@freepint.com>
Simon Collery, Content Developer
<simon@freepint.com>

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Free Pint Bookshelf[<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>](http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf)**"The Extreme Searcher's Guide to Web Search Engines" (2nd Ed.)****Written by Randolph Hock**
Reviewed by Duncan Parry

Search engines are one of the great contradictions of the Internet: they can provide quick, easy access to exactly the information you want within seconds - or frustrate you with hundreds of completely irrelevant results until you give up.

Randolph Hock aims to provide a reference handbook that covers the major search engines and guides the user through their individual features, strengths and weaknesses. His aim is to aid the 'extreme searcher' - the searcher who utilizes the strengths of particular engines and their advanced features - to find the information they seek quickly and efficiently.

He starts with a brief introduction to the history of searching Internet based resources (from gophers to WWW based engines) and continues with a description of the different elements of a search engine - useful as understanding a little of what's 'under the hood' of an engine can help determine its usefulness for different searches.

An explanation of the different search options that are commonly available (Boolean operators etc.) follows. Eight well known engines are then individually profiled in their own chapters, followed by examinations of several meta search and software tools. Finally there are details of sources of search engine information - including a certain site called Free Pint!

The value of this book lies in the chapters on individual engines and several tables which compare their different search features - invaluable in finding the right engine for a specialist search. Each chapter starts with a useful list of the engine's strengths and weaknesses - e.g. Northern Light's "Special Collection" of proprietary publications - and a description of the

features it offers. Details of how the engine spiders web pages and some indication of how often is included, as well as a useful list of the advanced search features of the engine and details of any additional databases it searches (e.g. Lycos' multimedia database).

One of the problems with different search engines is that they offer different advanced search options, and treat similar options differently. Usefully, each chapter details how the engine treats these operators, lists how to use them with examples and discusses how results are presented with indications of any useful options (e.g. "Facts About" on Altavista). There are also comments on other features like web directories or personalization options.

Even if you use several different search engines and are familiar with their advanced features this book is of value - I learnt about several useful options on engines I normally do not use - and the tables comparing different search options strike me as a particularly useful reference source. Usefully the website that accompanies the book - [<http://www.extremesearcher.com>](http://www.extremesearcher.com) - provides indications of changes and brief overviews of new engines.

If you spend a lot of time searching the web and want a reference source comparing the different engines, or if you are looking for a book that introduces you to more than just simple keyword searching, this could be the title for you.

Duncan Parry is a directory editor for Lycos UK, responsible for Computers, Technology, Internet and Telecommunications.

[<http://www.lycos.co.uk/>](http://www.lycos.co.uk/). He also provides freelance site design, promotion and writing services [<http://www.digitalstrike.co.uk>](http://www.digitalstrike.co.uk).

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- "The Extreme Searcher's Guide to Web Search Engines" (2nd Ed.) ISBN 0910965471 published by CyberAge Books and written by Randolph Hock
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[es1014]

Tips Article<http://www.freepint.com/issues/291101.htm#tips>**"Picture This: 'Free' Photos on the Web"**
By Patrick Hartary**Introduction**

Whether you work with print or online material, nothing makes your information look better than photographs. For today's content developers, there are dozens of enterprises on the Web where you can search, sample, and download all the stock photographs you could ever need. The downside is, you gotta pay to use them.

If you're looking for pictures for non-commercial use, here's some good news: there are a lot of high quality 'free' photos on the web you can use. You just need to know where to find them. Below is a collection of hyperlinks to some of the best 'free' photo galleries on the Web.

Photo Galleries

DHD Photo Gallery <http://www.hd.org/Damon/photos/>
Quantity: ~ 8,000 images
Categories: Many
Search engine: No
Terms: Free for personal and commercial use. Read terms and conditions
<<http://www.hd.org/Damon/photos/terms.html>>.
Notes: The site contains images from the World Trade Center terrorist attack.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency Photo Library
<<http://www.fema.gov/library/photo.htm>>
Quantity: Hundreds of images
Categories: Disaster sites
Search engine: Site search engine available
Terms: Read photo use agreement
<<http://www.fema.gov/fema/phuag.htm>>.
Notes: The site contains images from the Pentagon terrorist attack.

Lockheed Martin Digital Photo Collection
<<http://www.photos.external.lmco.com/>>
Quantity: ~ 1,000 images
Categories: Military and defense technology, aviation, aircraft
Search engine: Yes
Terms: "All images in this collection are copyright Lockheed Martin Corporation and are intended for non-commercial use only excluding those identified in the non-Lockheed Martin categories."
Notes: Most images are available in both low and high resolutions on this site.

NASA Photo Gallery
<<http://www.nasa.gov/gallery/photo/index.html>>
Quantity: Thousands of images
Categories: Astronomy, earth, flight vehicles, mission patches, robotics, solar system, space shuttle
Search engine: No
Terms: Read guidelines for proper use of NASA emblems and images
<<http://www.nasa.gov/gallery/photo/guideline.html>>.
Notes: The site contains additional links to NASA Research Center sites with photo galleries and non-NASA sites with space or aeronautics images. There's even a link to get hard copies of electronic images. In

addition, there's another NASA site called NASA Image Exchange that's trying to centralize all NASA photos. It can be found at <<http://nix.nasa.gov>> but was not functional the last time I visited the site.

Freefoto.com <<http://www.freefoto.com/>>
Quantity: 20,000 +
Categories: 40 main sections, with 600 subsections
Search engine: Yes
Terms: Free to private non-commercial users and for sale to commercial users. Read rules.
<<http://www.freefoto.com/pictures/information/rules.asp>>.
Notes: You can browse by category in this gallery, which makes searching very easy and quick.

Freeimages.co.uk <<http://www.freeimages.co.uk/>>
Quantity: Hundreds. Most images are 1152x864 or 1200x1600; all are 24-bit maximum quality jpeg. File size ranges between 100k and 1000k
Categories: Topical, technology and transport, backdrop, objects, buildings, home, sports and games, light, nature, food, workplace, and many others.
Search engine: Yes
Terms: "If you use our images a credit to this site is required." Read user license.
Notes: The site shows the top three galleries on its home page. It also has a search engine.

Freestockphotos.com <<http://freestockphotos.com/>>
Quantity: Hundreds
Categories: Lots of outdoor scenery and wildlife
Search engine: No
Terms: Read restrictions at the bottom of the home page.
Notes: The site contains links to other sites offering copyrighted photography free for personal use.

U.S. Department of Energy Digital Archive
<<http://www.doedigitalarchive.doe.gov/>>
Quantity: Thousands
Categories: All things energy related
Search engine: Yes
Terms: "Please be advised that DOE images generally are not copyrighted. Copyrighted images will credit the specific photographer. You may use DOE images for educational and informational purposes. If DOE images are to be used for commercial purposes, these must not explicitly or implicitly convey DOE's endorsement of commercial goods or services. Should these images include an identifiable person, using the image for commercial purposes may infringe on that person's right of privacy, and permission should be obtained from that person." Read legal notes
<<http://www.doedigitalarchive.doe.gov/legalnote.cfm>>.

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<<http://support.globalgold.co.uk/topic/?id=5>>

[gg1015]

Notes: You may need to create a free account to use this site.

istockphoto.com <<http://www.istockphoto.com/>>

Quantity: Thousands
Categories: Urban hip, New York, skating, men and women, everyday objects, and many more.
Search engine: Yes
Terms: Read licensing agreement.
Notes: This site may soon charge a yearly fee for unlimited use of images. You can search for new releases and get a listing of the most downloaded images.

Philip's House of Stock Photography

<<http://www.photo.net/stock/>>

Quantity: 6,000 +
Categories: Many
Search engine: Yes
Terms: Read copyright notice.
Notes: This site contains extensive links to other photo galleries.

Conclusions

The bottom line is, you have to read and abide by each gallery's terms and/or conditions statements. Federal agency galleries, like NASA's, allow just about any type of use. Others allow only non-commercial uses.

Someone once said a picture is worth a thousand words. In my mind, a 'free' picture is worth a lot more.

Patrick Hartary is a senior technical writer for a non-profit technology transfer organization based in the United States. As the editor of an award-winning newsletter highlighting innovative military technology with strong commercial promise, he is always on the look-out for 'free' photos to accompany his articles.

Related Free Pint links:

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"Communities of Practice" By Martin White

A community of practice is a way of developing best practice in a given area, established by members who wish to develop their specific expertise through open participation in the creation and exchange of knowledge. Of course best practice changes with time and with business circumstance, and so these communities will also need to adapt. The American business commentator Tom Stewart sums them up well in these words in his Leading Edge column in Fortune for 28 May 2001

<<http://www.fortune.com>> (Go to Leading Edge in the drop down menu under Columnists).

"Communities of practice are groups that emerge around a discipline or problem - a work-related subject like graphic design or the behaviour of derivative financial instruments. They have no agenda; they are defined by the subject that engages them, not by project, rank, department, or even corporate affiliation. They are where learning and innovation occur ... Learning is social, we have learned. Managers who focus on communities and teams can improve performance ... Bosses used to try to break up the gang by the water cooler. Now they support them with web sites".

Communities of practice have long existed in the physical world, using meetings, reports and memos to exchange best practice. Indeed they have their origins in the medieval guilds, of which the most sophisticated were the stone masons. More recently emails, instant messaging and collaborative workspaces have been used to an increasing extent to support communities of practice. Now we have reached the stage where we have moved to the development of online, or virtual communities, where the primary collaboration tools are all digital, and where the physical meeting is an exception, rather than the rule.

Etienne Wenger, along with Jean Lave, developed the concept of a community of practice whilst working at the Institute for Learning in Palo Alto in the mid-1980s, an organisation closely linked to the Xerox PARC research centre, first using the term in a book they authored in 1991. Wenger, Lave and William Snyder have been at the forefront of research into communities of practice for the last decade. Wenger and Snyder wrote an influential article on communities of practice in the January - February 2000 issue of Harvard Business Review. Entitled Communities of Practice: The Organisational Frontier, they set out a useful comparison in this very readable paper between a community of practice, a formal work group, a project team and an informal network. (Can be downloaded for a small fee from <<http://www.hbsp.harvard.edu/products/hbr/>>).

Another pioneer of communities of practice was John Seely Brown, and the history of his involvement with the work at Xerox can be found in the November 1995 issue of Fast Company at <<http://www.fastcompany.com/online/01/people.htm>>.

To be successful, online communities must show prompt and relevant benefits to both the employer and the employee. Communities constantly evolve and must be managed to keep them fresh and alive. Every community has a life cycle of infancy, maturity and death. It is possible however with good community management to prevent the death of a community by constantly evolving it

with the changing needs of its members, and introducing new functionality, topics or subgroups.

It is only over the last few years that the benefits and issues of communities of practice have started to be explored, probably as a result of the widespread adoption of intranets, which can provide a good platform for these communities. Two organizations that have been at the forefront of these developments have been the World Bank and BPAmoco. An example of a World Bank community (which is much wider than the Bank itself) can be found at http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/comm_partnering.html. The BPAmoco experience is well documented in Learning to Fly by Chris Collision and Geoff Parcell, published by Capstone Publishing in March 2001 <http://www.capstone.co.uk> but now owned by John Wiley and Sons <http://www.wiley.com>.

The range of web sites covering the development and management of communities of practice is still fairly limited, with the usual problem of what seem to be good sites not being maintained after the early enthusiasm, and a fair degree of overlap between sites.

Although not strictly a web resource, do look out for a literature review on Communities of Practice and Organisational Learning by Elisabeth Davenport and Hazel Hall which will be published in Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, Volume 36. ISBN 1-57387-131-1 Information Today Inc. New Jersey. <http://www.infotoday.com>. The publication date is Spring 2002, which means that the review will have been published about a year after compilation. Hazel Hall has also published a very interesting paper on Social Exchange for Knowledge Exchange, based on her doctoral thesis and this can be downloaded from http://www.bim.napier.ac.uk/esis/about_us/hazel.html. Another interesting paper is Information Exchange in Virtual Communities: A Typology by Gary Burnett, published in Information Research, Volume 5 No. 4, July 2000 at <http://informationR.net/ir/5-4/paper82.html> which has an excellent bibliography including many web references.

There is a Yahoo Groups site on Communities of Practice at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Com-Prac>.

I have divided the following resources into General Sites (for want of a better word), Consultants, Software/Systems Providers, and Other Sites.

General Sites

The Google Web Directory at "Reference>Knowledge Management>Knowledge Flow>Communities" of Practice is not a bad starting point, but misses several sites that appear in this review. However, the classification is a reminder that many of the knowledge management sites do cover community of practice issues http://www.intranetfocus.com/Knowledge_Management/knowledge_management.html but there is also overlap into human resources management. One of the best community of practice listings on a KM site can be found at <http://www.knowledgebusiness.com>. The page on communities of practice is an ASP file and is best found under the News section as the URL may not be persistent.

American Productivity and Quality Centre
<http://www.apqc.org/km>

APQC has long had an interest in knowledge management, and has also published a number of briefing papers on communities of interest. In April 2001 APQC published a book entitled Building and Sustaining Communities of Interest by Richard McDermott, Carla O'Dell and Cindy Hubert.

Department of Computer Science, University of York
<http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~kimble/index.html>

Chris Kimble and his colleagues have been researching various aspects of communities of practice for some years, and their personal site (not the main University site) contains a wealth of information, including a good set of links to related sites at http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~kimble/teaching/hi-2/topic_8.html.

IBM Institute for Knowledge Management http://www-1.ibm.com/services/kcm/kcm_ikm.html

The IBM Institute for Knowledge Management is at the centre of research into communities of practice. That is the good news. The not-so-good news is that membership of the IKM will cost you \$75,000 U.S. a year. However there is an excellent collection of articles on communities of practice and on other knowledge management issues in the IMB Systems Journal, Volume 40 No.4, 2001. Individual articles can be downloaded from <http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj40-4.html> or the entire issue can be purchased online for around \$40 U.S. depending on your location.

Knowledge Community <http://www.voght.com/cgi-bin/pywiki?KnowledgeCommunity>

My thanks to Hazel Hall at Napier University Business School for pointing out this site, which has a good list of links, but without any annotations.

Consultants

There are still relatively few consultants working in this area, but those that are have also made useful contributions to spreading the word through their web sites. These are arranged in surname order.

Fred Nickols <http://home.att.net/~discon/KM/CoPs.htm>

Some of the material on this site is a little dated, but of particular value is a list of most of the key early books and articles on the subject at <http://home.att.net/~discon/KM/CoPReadings.htm>.

McDermott Consulting <http://www.sinclair-thomson.com>

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A UK consulting practice which provides a good set of links, including one to a project that the company seems to have been carrying out for the UK Department of Trade and Industry. This project is also documented at http://www.kmu.org.uk/our_projects.html in a paper authored by Pat Langford which is a little different to the version linked to from the CKE site.

John D. Smith
<http://home.teleport.com/~smithjd/CP_bib/>

This is a list of references to communities of practice.

Etienne Wenger <<http://www.ewenger.com>>

As you will have read above, Etienne Wenger is one of the founders of community of practice consulting. His site also announces the establishment of CPsquare, a practitioners' consortium on communities of practice which Wenger has set up with Bill Snyder and Richard McDermott <<http://www.ewenger.com/ewprospectus.html>>.

Systems and Software Suppliers

The overlap between consulting and systems provision can be substantial, and all the companies listed below have put some effort into their sites.

Sift <<http://www.sift.co.uk>>

Sift are the leading UK company in the provision of a range of services to support online communities. I will declare an interest here, as Sift commissioned me to write a briefing paper on Employee Online Communities earlier this year. Their site has an excellent range of briefing papers and presentations.

TCM <<http://www.tcm.com>>

This site has an excellent array of resources and links, including a very comprehensive list of books <<http://www.tcm.com/hr-books/copbooks.htm>> that opens up the relevant page in Amazon <<http://www.tcm.com/trdev/morecops.htm>>. It lists 252 references from a search carried out on the Copernic site, but it is not clear when the search was conducted and posted.

ToMoYe <<http://www.tomoye.com>>

An intriguing name for this Canadian consulting and systems integration company. Not one of the best sites but worth a look.

Other sites

Community Intelligence Laboratories <<http://www.co-i-l.com>>

In the past I have found this site to be a useful resource on communities of practice, and it is referred to extensively from other sites listed above. However, whilst finalizing this article I was not able to gain access to the site for several days, and therefore have placed it in this Other category just in case there is some longer term problem.

Communities Online <<http://www.communities.org.uk>>

This is slightly outside the communities of practice area, as it

deals with social and neighbourhood communities, but the range of resources on the site might well be of interest to anyone contemplating setting up a community of practice in an organizational setting.

Communities-of-Practice <<http://communities-of-practice.pagina.nl>>

This is a Dutch language site which offers a wide range of links, some with Dutch titles but a number are in English, including a list of case studies. Worth buying a dictionary!

European Forum for Teamwork
<<http://www.efteam.org>>

This organization is concerned with some of the wider aspects of team working.

Infonortics <<http://infonortics.com>>

Infonortics is a UK company which organizes excellent conferences on virtual communities, and the next event takes place in London on 17-18 June 2002. Presentations from previous conferences can be downloaded from the site. The coverage is broader than just communities of practice, but there are many first class papers.

International Association for Human Resources
Information Management <<http://www.ihrim.com>>

Given the convergence between HR, IT and communities of practice this is a site that is worth watching, though at present there is not a great deal of content specifically on communities of practice.

Martin White is Managing Director of Intranet Focus Ltd., <<http://www.intranetfocus.com>> a UK company specializing in intranet strategy and deployment. The company's client list includes Hull City Council, the National Farmers Union, The Bank for International Settlements in Basel, and the International Monetary Fund in Washington. Martin writes a monthly column on intranet topics for EContent magazine <<http://www.econtentmag.com>> and is Chairman of the International Online Information Conference. Comments on this article can be addressed to <martin.white@intranetfocus.com>.

Martin is a Free Pint Regular
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/r21970>>.

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Many thanks for reading today's edition of Free Pint and we hope you picked up many new resources to help with your work. If you have a bunch of resources you'd like to share, then do check out the information for contributors at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>.

See you in two weeks!

William Hann, Founder and Managing Editor
<william@freepint.com>

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