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<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/300605.htm>>

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About FreePint

FreePint is an online network of information searchers. Members receive this free newsletter twice a month: it is 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 a substantial archive of articles, reviews, jobs and events, with answers to research questions and networking at the FreePint Bar.

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

ISSN 1460-7239

Editorial

In recent FreePint Editorials I've talked about the importance of networking. It's crucial to build up a network of contacts, whether you work for yourself or not. Another invaluable way to promote yourself and your organisation is to write articles, tips or reviews for magazines and newsletters in your area.



We all like to talk about what we do and what we're interested in, and we've found that the most popular articles in FreePint are

those that talk about the author's experiences. Articles written as stories are always the easiest to read, and I bet they're the easiest to write too.

For example, I met today's feature article author, Jean Bedord, at the conference of the Association of Independent Information Professionals in April <<http://www.freepint.com/portal/events/>>. I was very interested in her distance-learning method for educating the next generation of information professionals, and she tells us about it today.

As well as case studies, our series of FreePint Reports are also very popular <<http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/>>. They cover an author's area of expertise in an accessible format -- more in-depth than articles but not as daunting as a book.

We've just sent an invitation to members of FreePint to write articles and reports for us. Check out the 'FreePint Author Update' as it has some ideas for articles and gives information on earning commission as a FreePint report author <<http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>>.

We're experiencing a lot of upheaval here at the FreePint offices at the moment, as work starts on the refurbishment and extension to our office building. If you're interested in finding out what we're going through, then check out the dedicated Web site which has a diary and photos of the works as they progress <<http://www.stationapproach.com/>>.

Please do consider writing for FreePint and sharing your experiences with others in the community. At the very least, forward this issue of FreePint to any colleagues and friends who might find it useful.

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Jinfo :: Jobs in information

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The Jinfo service enables you to search for and advertise information-related job vacancies.

The Jinfo Newsletter is published free every two weeks, and contains a list of the latest vacancies along with job seeking advice. The latest editorial is entitled "Networking".

To read the latest Jinfo Newsletter and to subscribe to receive it twice-monthly by email, visit <<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Research Associate

Competitor intelligence, due diligence, report writing and analysis for case related research at business intelligence consultancy.

Recruiter: D A Solutions Ltd

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j4044>>

Librarian/Archivist

Could you help us archive our collection of books and documents so that we can open our collection to the public?

Recruiter: Town and Country Planning Association

Association

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j4155>>

Knowledge Manager

Knowledge Management challenge? Excellent developmental opportunity for experienced and confident Knowledge Manager.

Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j4159>>

Corporate Finance Researcher

Corporate finance research experience? Join London team of this national research service, good salary.

Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j4187>>

Records Management & Information Compliance Adviser

Manage the records management programme & systems, handle FoI & Data Protection requests & provide specialist advice.

Recruiter: South West Regional Development Agency

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j4193>>

[The above jobs are paid listings]

NB: There are 36 other jobs in the current edition of the Jinfo Newsletter

<<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>> and over 80 in the Jinfo database <<http://www.jinfo.com/>>.

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Emerging markets and economics data in VIP

ISI Emerging Markets is reviewed in the June issue of VIP, together with ISI's newly acquired economic databases from CEIC. The latter includes the CEIC China Domestic Database which is quickly becoming CEIC's best seller.

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

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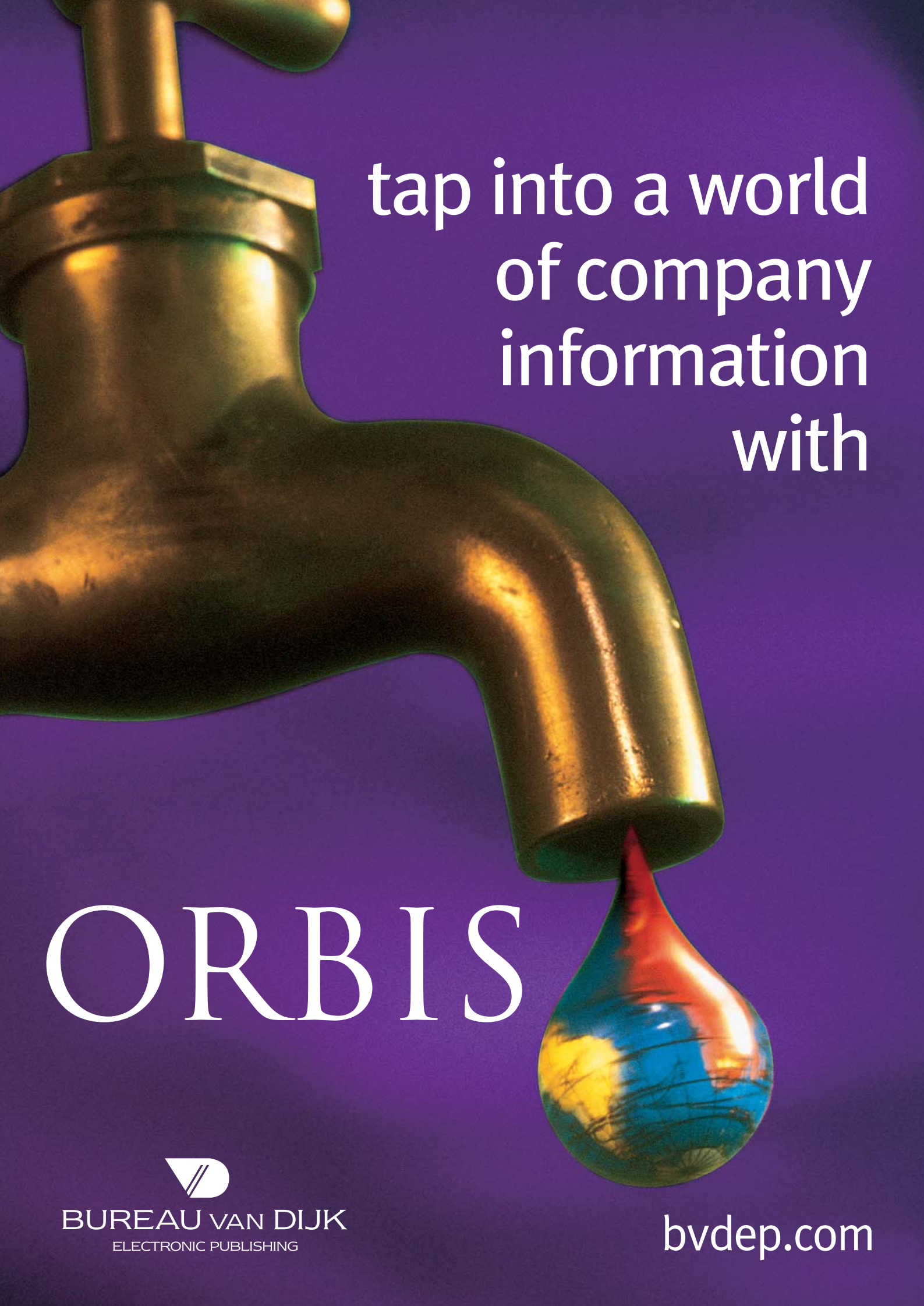
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Carl Roach is working behind the scenes to launch a free web service to let users combine calendars of public events with their personal diaries.

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

My Favourite Tipples

by Carl Roach

- I store bookmarks at del.icio.us <<http://del.icio.us>> for access from any computer. Metadata links my bookmarks to related sites.
- Flickr <<http://flickr.com>>, a photo web service, is becoming very popular among web developers as one can build it into blogs and other websites.
- Answers.com <<http://answers.com>> - no-fuss fact-checker recently chosen by Google as their dictionary service.
- I keep a regular eye on OSNews <<http://www.osnews.com>> for recent and future plans for operating systems.
- I dip into soothsayer Bob Cringely's site 'I, Cringley' <<http://www.pbs.org/cringely/>> for his analysis of the tech industry. He's not always right but is a guaranteed thought provoker.

Register for Search Tips from Factiva

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<http://www.factiva.com/emails/2005/freepinttext512>

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

FreePint Bar

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It has been another lively two weeks at the FreePint Bar with all sorts of tricky research questions and discussions.

On the topic of publishing, do you have any suggestions on how to get the word out about a new magazine for librarians <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32436>> or where you can download music from the Internet legally, for free? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b32401>. What about an online index for Peanuts cartoons? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32460>>

How about something technical: one FreePinter is having problems printing with Adobe <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32471>> and another with transferring footage from a cassette tape to a CD <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32410>>.

Want something to do in your lunch hour? How about taking part in a survey on the European Library portal - (you also get to donate to charity for free at the same time) <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32437>>. Do you have any stories of good and bad bosses <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32422>> -- a free white paper is up for grabs if you do.

There have been a few posters wanting company information: one is trying to find management consultancies in Poland <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32442>> and another wants to analyse the sectors and investment plans in UAE <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32453>>, can you help?

What about Italian financial information? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32428>> or where to access free Mintel (or other) reports on opening a health club? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32423>>

Do you know where to find information on the UK vehicle salvage industry <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32405>> or where to research the market for alcohol awareness training? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32469>>

And finally, we get all sorts of unusual topics at the FreePint Bar, this being one of them:

Is cat declawing illegal in the UK and Europe? Apparently not! <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b32430>>

See you next time.

Penny Hann, FreePint
<penny.hann@freepint.com>

*The FreePint Bar is where you can get free help with your tricky research questions <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
Twice-weekly email digests of the latest postings can be requested at <<http://www.freepint.com/subs/>>.*



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David Sarokin lives in Washington DC with his wife and two rambunctious kids, and spends far too much time on the internet. He is an environmentalist, a lapsed microbiologist, and has a day job with the federal government. In addition to his work with Google Answers, he is also President and Chief Executive Janitor of Sarokin Consulting, doing freelance research and consulting on due diligence, company background studies, family histories, legal and regulatory matters, data gathering, prior art, web-based information extraction, and a host of other topics. He's always happy to discuss potential projects, and would love the opportunity to write more about GA. You can reach him at < sarokin-at-gmail-dot-com >.

Tips Article

"An Insider's View of Google Answers" By David Sarokin

Somewhere in the world is a person who wants ... no, needs! ... some obscure piece of information.

Perhaps it's the number of Cessna 152s registered in the US; a transcript from a WWII war crimes trial; or details about the annual wheat harvest in Iran. Information that they cannot find, but that I can. The challenge is, how can we find one another? Amazingly, it's not that hard. The questioner simply states the question, offers a fee for an answer, and -- if the fee is reasonable -- the deal is done.

The scene of our little cyber-tete-a-tete is a wonderful web service known as Google Answers.

Mentioning Google Answers to folks often gets me a quizzical stare. The 'Google' part is clear enough, but what's this about Google answering questions? Is that any different than a plain old Google search?

In truth, Google Answers (GA) is one of Google's lesser-known, and lesser-used services. And that's a shame really, because it's one of the great tools available on the internet. GA picks up where routine internet searching leaves off:

- It's not automated -- there are human beings back there answering your questions.
- It's not instantaneous -- an answer may come in minutes, hours, or days.
- It's not a massive, loosely formatted data dump with a thousand results (most of which aren't relevant to what you want). Instead,
- GA provides highly professional, highly targeted, well-written answers that provide just the information needed, and a touch of humanity to boot.
- Information isn't limited to a Google search, but can come from a great many resources.
- And unlike conventional searching, GA isn't (gasp!) free. Putting all those humans to work will cost you ... but not very much.

Google Answers is more than a Q&A service, however. It's quite an intriguing web community in its own right. But more of that later on.

How Google Answers Works

The fastest way to get an overview of Google Answers is to have a look:

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/>>

Like the site says: Ask a question. Set your price. Get your answer.

Ask a question: Pretty much anything is fair

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game, from business queries, computer programming help, website design, medical information ... to advice for the lovelorn. Only a few things are off limits, like tracking down old boy/girlfriends, the inner workings of Google, doing your homework for you, or assisting in something patently illegal.

Set your price: offer whatever you think your question is worth, anywhere from \$2 to \$200. Researchers prefer the higher-priced questions, for obvious reasons, but it's actually quite amazing what some folks receive for their two bucks.

Get your answer: Ask, and ye shall receive ... usually! Not every question gets answered. Some are simply impossible, and a few, I'm sorry to say, are incomprehensible. But a well-focused, properly priced question almost always receives a top-notch answer.

Quality Control

The GA researchers

There are several hundred of us on contract with Google -- all carefully screened by the powers-that-Goog to ensure that only those with the requisite skills in research, writing and customer service are on the team.

Good research skills are essential. GA isn't simply a matter of conducting a Google search for customers too lazy to do it on their own. Sometimes a search takes a sophisticated understanding of how best to target results. Here's a recent Google search of mine that was elaborately constructed, using the "OR" feature and the number range feature and the wildcard asterisk, all inside the exact phrase (quote marks) feature: ["10..1000 most * companies OR corporations OR brands"] -- plug it into a Google search to see the sort of nicely-targeted results it produces.

Many questions are answered without using Google at all. Researchers may rely on their own

Related FreePint links:

- 'Internet Searching' articles in the FreePint Portal
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- Post a message to the authors, David Sarokin, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar
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expertise -- I'm a microbiologist, for instance -- and on a wealth of resources, both online and offline. I'm fortunate to have access to Lexis-Nexis, Proquest, Factiva, EBSCO, JSTOR, and a host of other databases that can be brought to bear in researching a question.

And all the cyber-poking around we do leads us to discover a lot of amazing resources available to everyone, but tucked away in odd corners of the web, like the EU patent database that also includes patents from the US and Japan (how cool is that?), and goes back to the 1800's <<http://digbig.com/4dpge>>.

Still, what assurance does a customer have that they will get a satisfactory answer? Easy. If you don't like your answer, you don't pay for it (other than a fifty cents listing fee). That simple rule keeps the researchers very focused on providing quality answers. Customers can also rate an answer from one to five stars, and, trust me, no one enjoys getting anything less than a five star rating. Still, you can't please everyone, all the time, as you can see by one of the rare answers of mine (on clinical trials) that did get rejected <<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=346564>>.

For the most part, though, ratings are high, rejections are rare, and our clients seem quite satisfied. Well they should be. Some of the work provided at Google Answers would easily cost thousands of dollars if it came from a professional marketing research firm, web site customization service, computer programmer or private investigator. Take a look, for instance, at this customized research on the thermoplastics market done under a tight deadline at a bargain-basement price <<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=519557>>.

In a sense, this is GA at its most powerful, and most valuable -- as a professional quality research tool for augmenting in-house research staff. I don't think there is currently any service other than GA that could have provided such excellent work at such a minimal price.

Questions, Questions, Questions

It's almost impossible to characterize just what gets asked at GA; the questions are all over the map, both literally (Nigerian towns in the 1700s), cybernetically (visualizing a map of the internet) and metaphorically (find me a map to salvation). But there are certain themes that do tend to repeat over and over, such as:

- Help me come up with a great name for my company
- How do I get rid of my search history (I don't want my mom seeing where I've been)
- I have a great idea for a toy/movie/TV show/website/invention ... how can I get

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somebody to pay me for it?

- I want the private cell phone number of Bill Gates, George Bush, Britney Spears ...
- How can I get my website to show up as #1 on a Google search (sorry...this one's off limits)
- What is my domain name/grandma's tea set/painting-in-the-attic worth (general answer: probably not as much as you think)
- Please give me amazingly clever ideas for -- or completely plan -- my vacation/business trip/wedding/birthday party/honeymoon
- Give me the name and contact for every company in China/the US/Europe/the world that makes toys/handbags/chemicals/cement, etc.

Not all the questions get answered, of course. The last one, in particular, belongs to the category of "every" questions, where a customer wants every single one of a particular thing. Once we explain that there may be a million such things, and can't assure that every single one is

FreePint Forthcoming Articles

[Provisional]

- Competitive intelligence
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- Developments in local search
- Knowledge management within the SME sector
- The Slow Movement
- Cross-cultural management * Business information in Germany
- The 9 Ps of publishing
- User employee abuse of the Internet
- Free public domain and copyrighted e-books online
- Asperger's syndrome and autism

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listed, we can usually come to some reasonable alternative for the client.

Then there are the questions that just make you sit back and wonder, where the heck did ****that**** come from:

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=520528>> Subject: Hunter Gatherer Diet

Did hunter-gatherer humans (those eating diets that are pre cultivation/domestication) eat the intestines and/or the intestinal contents of their animal prey, and if so, what parts did they eat (e.g. rumen, caecum, colon).

At last check, the question hadn't yet been answered.

A few questions that I know in my heart should be answerable have thus far eluded the research team. Have a look, and if you have any leads for getting these answered, drop me a line (or go public, and post a comment at GA):

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=516261>> Poor guy is looking for a very particular stuffed bunny.

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=518577>> Patient looking for a source of a perfectly legal but hard to find medication.

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=523867>> Spreadsheet of Members of the S&P 500 1950-1975

(These questions may be expired by the time this article is in print, but don't let that stop you).

And most researchers seem to have a personal favorite question, but I actually had a hard time coming up with mine. This one about an (apparently) bogus ambassador comes close, though:

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=136802>> US Ambassador-at-Large Elena Lilly

The Google Answers Community

Considering that I've never met any of my employers or customers face- to-face -- and have only had that pleasure with three of my fellow

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researchers -- there's quite a weird, wonderful, close-knit, cantankerous community of GA aficionados. It's not only the researchers and customers who make it so. There is also the 'peanut gallery' of about a score of regular commenters (did I mention GA has a comments section where anyone can post), who offer their wisdom, information, wisecracks, insults and occasional idiocy. The all-time GA record for the question with the most comments was posted by a favorite peanut gallery regular, and can be seen at:

<<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=161982>>

The researchers themselves have a number of cyberforums where we get together and trade professional resources, commiserate, share some news, or whine (Wah! You stole my question!). The overall feel is one of enormous camaraderie and pride. We all love being GA researchers, and part of the amazing Google phenomenon. It's a mixed group of folk from all over the world: scientists, mathematicians, programmers, web-designers and SEO specialists, playwrights, private investigators, law enforcement types, pilots, and an assortment of Renaissance researchers who are good at, and knowledgeable about, almost everything. The diversity is an important attribute, as some questions that have me absolutely stumped, can be answered by someone else with the just the right set of skills.

As a researcher for Google Answers, I feel I have the best job in the world. It's interesting, rewarding, infinitely varied, perfectly flexible. I work when, where, and as often as I want to, the people I work with are uniformly wonderful, and my clients are a diverse and fascinating group.

Now ... if only I could make a living!

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Steve Lee is Web Content Manager for Consumer Direct. Consumer Direct is a telephone and online consumer advice service supported by the Department of Trade and Industry. It was launched in mid-2004 and will ultimately be rolled out across England, Scotland and Wales.

Before taking up his present post, he held a range of information management posts in British Trade International (now UK Trade & Investment), including information researcher, database and website manager, and Information Manager for the organisation's Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme.

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- "The Content Management Handbook" ISBN 1856045331, published by Library Assn Pub Ltd.

FreePint Bookshelf

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

"The Content Management Handbook" Reviewed by Stephen Lee

Martin White is the Managing Director of Intranet Focus Ltd <<http://www.intranetfocus.com>>. He has long experience of the introduction of content management technology in different sectors, experience that he shares in the Content Management Handbook.

For White, content is 'the building block of information, and so at least [of] explicit knowledge'. As he records, in today's competitive world, the effective use of information can make the difference between the success or failure of an organisation. In practice, however, 'granular information' (content) is all too often held in a range of formats, applications and systems, and managed in discrete areas.

To obtain maximum benefit from its content, an organisation needs the capability to manage it coherently and effectively. This capability, White argues, should be expressed in a corporate Content Management Strategy, and delivered via a Content Management System (the reader will be relieved to know that the range of possible definitions of the acronym CMS is addressed early on!). In the Handbook, White takes the reader through the development of a corporate strategy, considers the options for the system or systems that will realise it, and finally looks at the practicalities involved in implementing those systems to achieve strategic goals.

White argues that the implementation of content management technology must be approached systematically, as a project in its own right, rather than as an 'add on' for staff, and his experience shows as he clearly and logically sets out the steps involved to the delivery of the system(s) concerned. He places less emphasis on the softer aspects of implementation such as change management, and on post implementation evaluation and review. Throughout, however, he successfully balances the practical (the nuts and bolts of implementing the technology) with a watchful focus on strategic objectives (the desired business benefits).

FreePint

Contributors to this issue:

William Hann (FreePint Managing Editor), Penny (FreePint Administrator), David Sarokin, Jean Bedord, Carl Roach, Stephen Lee, Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proofreading).

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This is a practical guide, rather than a doorstep-sized volume seeking to address every aspect of its subject in exhaustive detail. To this end, every chapter includes a summary and list of further references, and the final chapter offers a selection of books and websites for those seeking further information. The Handbook is also liberally provided with useful checklists and guides - everything from sample questions for an audit of information use, and outline plans for vendor presentations, to advice on preparing a business case and developing a statement of requirements.

The Content Management Handbook covers a lot of ground in less than 150 (sometimes rather densely packed) pages. It pulls no punches in making it clear that the effective implementation of content management technology across an organisation is a lengthy and involved process. This said, following the practical advice it provides will undoubtedly help ensure that key concerns are addressed, and unpleasant or unexpected surprises minimised, along the way.

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What is DigBig?

DigBig is a free service that shortens long Web addresses (URLs) to make them easier to communicate.

You simply paste in a long URL and it gives you a much shorter one back.

Try it out at www.DigBig.com

Testimonials

"Einfach. Genial. Danke!"

Project Manager, Überlingen, Germany (June 2005)

"Vous me sauvez la vie, vraiment génial, brillante idée!"

Web Designer, Brussels, Belgium (June 2005)



The screenshot shows the digbig website interface. At the top left is the digbig logo. To its right is a navigation menu with links: Home, Guidance, Button, Testimonials, Network (with a dropdown arrow), and Support (with a dropdown arrow). Below the navigation is a large text input box with the instruction: "Enter or paste a Web address (URL) in the box below to make it much shorter:". Below the input box is a "Go DigBig >>" button. Underneath is a "Tips:" section with three columns of text: "Read the Introduction and Guidance Notes before using.", "Add a DigBig Button for convenient access.", "Read Testimonials from existing users.", "View a 30 second demo of DigBig", and "Your IP address is registered as 81.130.142.95 [why?]". At the bottom right corner, there is a copyright notice: "© Willco Limited 1996-2005".

Feature Article

"Promoting Information and Search Skills" By Jean Bedord



Jean Bedord is a consultant who specializes in business analysis, electronic product strategies and marketing for publishers and content technology companies. She is currently a Senior Analyst with Shore Communications, <<http://www.shore.com>> and a frequent contributor to the Shorelines blog, commenting on emerging trends in the content business, as well as a contributor to industry publications. She has been a speaker on eBook strategies and widely quoted in this emerging market. Jean's introduction to online information began as a product manager for Dialog business and pharmaceutical databases. She established her own consultancy, eContent Strategies <<http://www.econtentstrategies.com>>, after leaving Dialog, then joined Shore.

Search has assumed new dimensions from the days when I was licensing publisher content and designing databases for Dialog. Technology has changed drastically, and the range of content has exploded, yet the basics of search skills remain the same. I teach a class in Online Searching as adjunct faculty at the graduate school of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University, and my students remind me of the evolution. They enter the class assuming they are proficient searchers, using popular search engines, and complete the class with a high appreciation of the commercial search services, both for sources and capabilities.

Today's teaching environment

My teaching situation is typical of information professionals' future. As starters, the class is taught virtually, meaning that I never actually meet my 25 to 30 students each semester face-to-face. This semester, one of them lived in Hong Kong, which created timing challenges for scheduling online vendor presentations using Webex <<http://www.webex.com>>. Most students are working, so they enrol part time in the program, and do their class work on weekends and evenings, to their own individual schedules. Fortunately, most have broadband connections, which is a better environment for the virtual classroom.

The class is administered using Blackboard <<http://www.blackboard.com>> which quite nicely integrates the backend functionality to track enrolled students, assignments, grades, and class announcements. As an instructor, I post my 'lectures' plus reading and searching assignments as Word documents for them to view and print out. The equivalent of class-room discussions are the Discussion Boards, divided into different topics, week by week. This participation is twenty percent of their grade, and my major gauge on class progress. This type of environment places a premium on writing and visual skills, particularly in communicating ideas and tone. As the semester progresses, fluency in this medium increases remarkably, as the personalities emerge. I don't use online chat, since it's difficult for my students to all be online at once, plus I prefer the more thoughtful style of posting complete thoughts.

Accommodating differences in learning styles is a challenge. Dialog, Factiva and Lexis-Nexis include extensive materials in their generous library school programs. I use a number of these, though had to sift to find the right materials for an introductory class. Workbooks with answers at the back are particularly useful since my students can practice the problems and immediately check their strategy. This also reduced the number of graded individual assignments, a definite workload consideration.

Both Dialog and Factiva have videos on their websites, which were quite useful, since my students could listen at their own convenience. Some students simply learn better with the combination of voice and visual, and I would like to have more of this media. Interestingly, Lexis-Nexis does not have any videos. All three services provide live conference training, which students greatly appreciate, though students couldn't always work the times into their schedules. The vendor materials and training also serve to reinforce to students the value of commercial services.

Students reflect the services they know

Several students enrolled assuming they would be learning advanced techniques for searching the Web, not realizing there was a world of commercial search services. With the exception of a few who already have access to one of the 'big 3' at work, the rest are overwhelmed when I immerse them in Dialog Classic. This requires reading documentation, aka BlueSheets, to learn about fields and indexing, concepts blithely ignored in the web search engine environment, but invaluable for the information professional. I position command level searching as a programming language, requiring precise statements to obtain relevant results. It takes a while, but then students discover the flexibility of the command-level structure and the precision of their results, particularly with a known-item search.

Learning to differentiate between syntax errors and logical errors is more challenging. My students are somewhat familiar with Proquest and Gale indexed and abstracted databases, and learn the usefulness of the descriptors. Then they have to switch searching styles when dealing with full-text databases, particularly newspapers. I found students doing subject searches limiting their search terms to the title field, not realizing that titles are notoriously poor indicators of the actual subject!

The synonym problem

Experienced searchers automatically think about alternative search terms, regardless of whether they are in the Web search environment (keywords) or commercial services (search terms). But many of my students use the exact words in the search problem, not looking at additional terminology that would be more comprehensive or considering alternative spellings. They have to learn to search on "women", "woman" and "female", not just one term. Indexing using controlled vocabularies and thesauri are new territory, but appreciated after they understand the concept. Then they start complaining when inconsistencies due to human indexing are uncovered!

Related FreePint links:

- 'Information and Libraries' articles in the FreePint Portal <http://www.freepint.com/go/p69>
- Post a message to the author, Jean Bedord, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar <http://www.freepint.com/bar>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <http://www.freepint.com/issues/300605.htm#feature>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

Interestingly, by the end of class, some of the students began using Google to discover and refine search terms before going to the commercial search services. It's instructive that the web search engines are useful to discover different contexts in a more intuitive way than the structured environment developed for the commercial services. Students develop a healthy skepticism of the open web resources, as well as an appreciation of the precision of the commercial services, but find the open web useful as a linguistic tool.

So many sources!!!

Most of my students have no idea of the range of sources available, either in commercial services or on the Web itself. For the public Web, I find that the Extreme Searcher's Internet Handbook by Ran Hock <http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/extreme3.htm> is well liked, especially by the public librarians and school media specialists with minimal budgets. I particularly like having a companion site, <http://www.extremesearcher.com> to keep references in the book up to date, a good way to blend traditional and online media.

For the commercial services, one exercise is to explore the Dialog Database Catalog and OneSearch categories <http://support.dialog.com/searchaids/essentials.shtml>. Students delight in finding such sources as their local newspaper, Consumers Report or Standard & Poor's. They quickly grasp that determining the right source is part of the art of searching. Most are somewhat familiar with bibliographic databases since they have access to an extensive collection at San Jose Library, a combination of public library and academic library. However, finding company profiles, product information, chemical structures and patent records is new territory, as is the ISI citation databases. They learn about a wide variety of business sources on Factiva, and public records on Lexis- Nexis.

To introduce them to the concept that the same information can be found on multiple services, one required exercise is to do the same MEDLINE search on both Dialog and PUBMED. This allows them to see the difference in information retrieval

with different interfaces. In addition, it introduces them to an authoritative source of health information, an increasingly important area of searching. The general reaction by the end of class is that they would never think of searching in the same simplistic terms, and were learning to use advanced searching features, even in their web searches.

One of the challenges with teaching students about different sources is that the library websites available to them typically blend both authoritative free websites with licensed databases, as you can see at the San Jose Library website <http://www.sjlibrary.org/research/databases/index.htm>. Differentiating between the business models which support these databases is not always obvious. I can only provide guidelines and a framework for determining when commercial services are the best choice for an information query.

Search skills are marketable!

At the end of the semester, I explore where online searching fits into the job market, pointing out that the 'librarian' title is limited to traditional institutions. But searching and organizational skills are widely applicable in a variety of areas, such as researcher, analyst, knowledge management, records management, information architecture and competitive intelligence. And there are additional opportunities working for publishers and vendors to the information market.

Then I explore job opportunities in the web world, and it is a different dialect. Taxonomies and classification have become hot--but aren't these just different terms for thesauri and indexing? Isn't metadata just abstracting? Isn't content management basically managing a collection, even if the information is not in physical format? And isn't customer support in the information industry basically reference? And isn't database management the same as managing a library catalog?

It's all in the terminology! And as information professionals, or information scientists, or researchers or analysts, this is a lesson we know well.

Events

- "European Conference on IS Management, Leadership and Governance" 7th - 8th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e477>>
- "Instructional Design for e-learning" 7th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e506>>
- "Understanding Creative Commons UK Licences" 7th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e516>>
- "4th European Conference on Information Warfare and Security" 11th - 12th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e480>>
- "SLA Europe Summer Soiree" 12th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e515>>
- "Introduction to Knowledge Auditing - 1-Day Course" 14th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e445>>
- "Marketing e-learning" 15th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e505>>
- "EDRM strategies for the public sector" 5th - 6th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e524>>

- "2nd Annual Optimising search and retrieval" 11th - 12th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e526>>
- "Demonstrating the value of internal communications" 12th - 13th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e525>>
- "To Boldly Go! Exploring New Archival Frontiers" 13th July
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e517>>

These are just a selection of the 52 global events listed on the FreePint Website at
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Gold

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

- FreePint No.162 1st July 2004. "Trends in Business Information Provision and Use" and "GIS Enabling the Internet"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/010704.htm>
- FreePint No.140 10th July 2003. "Copyright and the Internet: Myth and Reality" and "The Product Development Cycle"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/100703.htm>
- Free Pint No.115 27th June 2002. "RSI and the Library and Information Science Professional"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/270602.htm>
- * Free Pint No.91, 5th July 2001. "D.I.Y. Site Design" and "Obtaining Grants"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/050701.htm>
- Free Pint No.66, 6th July 2000. "Panorama of Engineering Portals" and "Surfing the Sludge - Tips on Good Web Page Design"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/060700.htm>
- Free Pint No.42, 8th July 1999. "Electronic commerce" and "Plastics and Rubber Information on the Internet"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/080799.htm>
- Free Pint No.17, 25th June 1998. "Finding information products and services via the Net" and "Bioscience Information on the Internet"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/250698.htm>

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