

# Tales from the Terminal Room

## October 2003, Issue No. 46

Editor: Karen Blakeman  
Published by: RBA Information Services  
ISSN 1467-338X

<http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/>

---

Tales from the Terminal Room (TFTR) is a monthly newsletter, with the exception of July and August which are published as a single issue. TFTR includes reviews and comparisons of information sources; updates to the RBA Web site Business Sources and other useful resources; dealing with technical and access problems on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications.

---

Welcome to the October 2003 issue of Tales from the Terminal Room!

Eagle eyed regular readers of TFTR may have noticed that September's issue went AWOL. Due to a combination of a very heavy work load, helping out a friend with a kaput computer (more of that in the November issue) and having to deal with an horrendous amount of spam (see 'These things are sent to try us' in this issue) the deadline for September came and went without a single line having been written. Rather than cram two issues into October, it was decided to forget about September 2003 and resume normal service with October.

In the June issue, we mentioned that a PDF version of the newsletter would soon be produced. I am delighted to report that this option is now available on both the Web site and as an e-mail delivery option. If you are an existing subscriber and would like to take advantage of the new format, simply email us at [tftr@rba.co.uk](mailto:tftr@rba.co.uk) with a subject line of 'PDF version please' and we will do the necessary at our end. New subscribers can choose Plain Text or PDF when using the subscription form at <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/>.

Karen Blakeman

### In this issue:

- Google launches synonym search
- Wayback Machine tests Recall for archives
- Information resources
  - EINS GEM
  - Google introduces News Alerts
  - Factiva introduces new pay-as-you-go subscription
  - Telintell for free information on global telecommunications
  - Grants Online
  - Access Funds - Grants information for the British charitable and non-profit sector
- These things are sent to try us!
  - 1427 news messages - and counting
- Gizmo of the Month
  - DUN Manager
- Meetings and Workshops
  - Assessing the quality of information

## Google launches synonym search

Over the summer Google (<http://www.google.com/>) launched - very quietly - a new advanced search feature: synonym searches. Very often you may want to search not only for a particular keyword, but also for its synonyms. The way one would normally do this is by using OR to separate the various terms. For example if you wanted to look for articles about the artificial sweetener aspartame and products that contain it, you might search using the strategy 'aspartame OR canderel OR nutrasweet'. Now, Google claims, you can search for synonyms by placing the tilde sign ("~") immediately in front of the keyword, for example ~aspartame.

Google has not let on how this works or how the synonym groups are set up, and the numbers do not always add up. When I first tried it out with a search on aspartame Google came up with 152,000 results. A search on ~aspartame included articles about Canderel and Nutrasweet that do not specifically mention aspartame, but the total number of results was a mere 85,100! Similarly a search on aspirin found 806,000 pages whereas ~aspirin reduced the number to 424,000.

When I repeated the aspartame search a few days later a search on aspartame found 93,700 pages and ~aspartame 109,000, which looks much more sensible. But on my third attempt, I had yet another completely different set of topsy-turvy results.

To confuse matters further, the synonyms are not always accurate. The ~aspartame search also picks up pages about sucralose, which is a completely different artificial sweetener. OK, they are both sweeteners but they are chemically different. If you were looking for articles that mention adverse reactions to, say, aspartame, you may unwittingly pick up and use data on sucralose.

These oddities aside, synonym search is a useful addition to advanced searching, but use it with caution. It is still worth repeating your searches using the 'OR' command to search for synonyms.

---

## Wayback Machine tests Recall for archives

The Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/>) has browsable archives of many Web sites going back to 1996. This is an extremely useful tool for researchers trying to track down documents that have disappeared from the Web, but you do have to know the URL of the page.

The Wayback Machine is now testing a new function, called Recall, that enables you to carry out a keyword search on about 35 per cent of the database. The results include a graph of "returned pages by date" and options for narrowing down your search using categories and topics. You can also limit your search by the date the page was captured by the Wayback Machine. I found the categories and topics options erratic when I tested the service out and the ones that Recall suggests are sometimes very odd. But it is still in Beta test so a few oddities are to be expected.

The results themselves give a short description of each Web page that has been found and links to the copies of the pages in the Wayback database.

The beta version of Recall can be found at <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>

---

## Information Resources

**EINS GEM** <http://www.gemcatcher.com/>  
A recent addition to our "General" sources, but certainly not new to the Web, is EINS GEM. GEM provides access to a wide range of priced databases of mostly scientific, technical and medical information, many of which also contain useful company and industry information. These are produced by many different organisations and made available by a range of Service Providers. There are three main search options: Command Search, Easy Search and Telnet.

Complementary services such as Lexis-Nexis and PR Newswire provide news, company financials, business and legal information. You are required to sign a contract for the service but it is one of the few to offer pay-as-you-go access across the whole range of databases. Full details of content, prices and how to subscribe can be found on the GEM Web site.

## News Sources

### Google introduces News Alerts

Google has introduced a News Alert service. The Alerts are accessed via Google News (<http://news.google.com/>). Simply enter your search strategy in the 'News search' box, select the frequency of the alert ('once a day' or 'as it happens') and fill in your email address. Google will then send you an email asking you to confirm your alert. After that you are alerted by email whenever there are new stories that fit your criteria. You can also use the Advanced News Search to set up alerts: this gives you the option to search specific sources, the country in which the source is located and to limit your search by date.

### Factiva introduces new pay-as-you-go subscription

Factiva (<http://www.factiva.com/>) has announced a new pay as you go subscription option for individuals and small businesses. Factiva.com Individual Subscription offers access to both the Search and Track areas of Factiva.com. This includes search functionality and Track Folders that offer filtered news. Delivery of Track results by email is also available.

You can register for the Factiva.com Individual Subscription online using a credit card at <http://www.factiva.com/individualsubscription/>

The annual fee for the Individual Subscription is USD 69. News tracking folders are USD 9.95 per month. Articles cost USD 2.95 each.

## Market Research and Statistics

### Telintell for free information on global telecommunications

A new service called Telintell (<http://www.telintell.com/>) offers a searchable database of links to the free telecoms market research and statistics, and free monthly email updates of the latest additions to the database. The sources include telecoms companies, government departments, regulatory bodies, private companies and management consultants. Topics covered include fixed and mobile telecoms, broadband, Internet and WiFi. Coverage is global.

## Support for SMEs

Two services have been added to the Grants section of our Support for SMEs listing. The first is Grants Online (<http://www.grantsonline.org.uk/>), which is a subscription service providing information on the latest and current calls for proposals from the European Union, UK Government, National Lottery and New Opportunities Fund. It also offers External Funding Alert - a fortnightly publication providing information on the latest calls for proposals.

The second, Access Funds - Grants information for the British charitable and non-profit sector (<http://www.access-funds.co.uk>), offers grants information for the British charitable and non-profit sector. This site aims to provide the latest funding information from Central Government, National Lottery, devolved governing bodies, EU and quangos. Services include email alerts, training courses, directories of funding programmes and guides to funding.

---

## These things are sent to try us!

### 1427 new messages - and counting

An Internet Service Provider (ISP) who allows you to have an unlimited number of email addresses has its advantages: you can set up any combination of names before your domain name, use unique email addresses in promotional literature and then track which has been the most successful. And you will still receive mail from friends who have got the bit before the @ symbol wrong.

The disadvantages are that you pick up email that should have been addressed to a person at a similar domain name and which has been mistyped as yours. You can also fall prey to spammers and their detection avoidance techniques. In the past I have dealt with the former by having a polite, standard email that I sent back to the sender asking them to check their address book. With only a couple a day, I could handle that without resorting to automated responders.

For obvious spam, my ISP's Brightmail filter

catches about 95% and I hit the delete button on those that escape undetected and are downloaded to my PC. Then one day I noticed that my morning email was taking an inordinately long time to download from the mail server. My email program said "1427 new messages..." and was still counting. Either I had won a popularity contest and business was about to go into orbit, or something had gone seriously wrong. It was the latter ☹

Of the 1765 messages that finally arrived, only 53 were bona fide messages. The rest were automated failed delivery messages from various mail servers saying that my message could not be delivered to the recipient because the address had not been recognised. As for the content, it ranged from offers of Viagra prescriptions to cheap motorcycle parts!

My initial thoughts were that I had some sort of virus on my machines and had unwittingly sent out this garbage. On closer inspection, it became clear that I was a victim of the forged 'From/Reply to:' trick used by spammers. To try and avoid detection, spammers will often take an email address from their distribution list and insert it into the 'From' and 'Reply to' fields of the message. A variation on this theme is to automatically generate random addresses at valid domain names: in my case I was seeing odd combinations of letters, for example 3h79sdas@rba.co.uk.

As well as avoiding abusive messages from irate recipients of the email, the spammer also misses out on the inevitable deluge of failed delivery messages. I was getting them all instead. With a steady flow of hundreds a day the flood showed no signs of abating, and deleting the messages manually was not an efficient way of dealing with it.

So, what to do?

I quickly learnt from CIX Online conferencing (<http://www.cix.co.uk/>), of which I have been a member for many years, that others had had similar experiences. One fellow sufferer pointed me in the direction of Magenta Systems' DUN Manager (see Gizmo of the Month below). I have used this in the past to compare the costs of ISPs and telecom operators in the days when there was no such thing as unmetered Internet access, but it is now more than a connection monitoring tool. The latest version has spam processing

options, and - joy, oh joy! - an invalid account filter.

The invalid account filter lets you list valid mail accounts to which all acceptable mail must be addressed. Mail addressed to invalid accounts, in my case for example 3h79sdas@rba.co.uk, can be automatically deleted from the mail server without download and/or bounced back to the sender with the message:

"This message was created automatically by mail delivery software. A message that you sent could not be delivered. The following address(es) failed: 3h79sdas@rba.co.uk. Account does not exist on this server."

There is a 'Test Bounce and Delete' that prevents spam actually being deleted or bounce messages being sent. Magenta advises that this is used for a few days when setting up the various options in case of errors, and I wholeheartedly endorse that recommendation. I had forgotten about half a dozen valid email addresses that had been set up over the last 5 or 6 years and they were treated as invalid until I added them to my accept list. There is also an 'Activity Log' that keeps details of received mail and associated spam processing, and the 'Task' log shows a summary of how many spams were processed.

I am now pleased to be able to report that, with DUN Manager in place my inbox is back to a more manageable size. I can now get back to dealing with real day to day business - such as writing Tales from the Terminal Room!

---

## Gizmo of the Month

### DUN Manager

<http://www.magsys.co.uk/>

DUN Manager was the first 'Gizmo' to be reviewed by TFFTTR in September 1999, Issue No. 2. At that time we highlighted its ability to keep tabs on the cost of your Internet telephone charges and to monitor connection speeds and problems.

It has moved on significantly since then and Angus Robertson of Magenta Systems has

added many extra functions, one of which is a spam processing option. This enables you to delete from your mail server any messages that have been sent to invalid email addresses on your domain.

The Check for Mail function checks to see if new mail has arrived on your POP3 server. Legitimate email can be separated from spam in three stages: using your specified list of valid accounts; matching text against spam filters; and then a white list that allows false filter detections to be overridden. Once spam has been detected, you can automatically delete it from the POP3 server, bounce it back to the sender, or archive it into a single daily spam text file in case real mail has been wrongly identified as spam.

DUN Manager may be evaluated for 30 days, after which it must be registered. Registration costs GBP 25. A copy of the program can be downloaded from <http://www.magsys.co.uk/>

---

---

## Meetings and Workshops

### Forthcoming Courses

**Workshop:** Assessing the Quality of Information

**Organiser:** TFPL

**Presenter:** Karen Blakeman

**Venue:** TFPL, London

**Date:** Monday, 17th November 2003

**URL:** <http://www.tfpl.com/>

This is a new course that looks at separating fact from fiction, and how to scrutinise the credentials of a Web site or author. Although all types of media, including print, will be covered the emphasis will be on electronic resources. The techniques are applicable to all sectors and types of organisations, and all levels of expertise.

## Contact Information

Karen Blakeman, RBA Information Services  
UK Tel: 0118 947 2256  
Int. Tel: +44 118 947 2256

UK Fax: 0870 056 8547  
Int. Fax: +44 870 056 8547

Address: 88 Star Road, Caversham, Berks  
RG4 5BE, UK

## Archives

TFTTR archives:

<http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/archives/>

## Subscribe and Unsubscribe

To subscribe to the newsletter fill in the online registration form at <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/>

To unsubscribe, use the registration form at <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/> and check the unsubscribe radio button.

---

---

## Privacy Statement

Subscribers' details are used only to enable distribution of the newsletter **Tales from the Terminal Room**. The subscriber list is not used for any other purpose, nor will it be disclosed by RBA Information Services or made available in any form to any other individual, organisation or company.

---

---

This publication may be copied and distributed in its entirety. Individual sections may NOT be copied or distributed in any form without the prior written agreement of the publisher.

Copyright (c) 2003 Karen Blakeman. All rights reserved

---

---