

# **Tales from the Terminal Room**

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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.

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## I'm an information professional - get me out of here!

**Date:** Tuesday, 8th June 2004, 9.30 - 16.30

**Venue:** CILIP, London

Tense, nervous headache?

Have you ever experienced that stressful situation where, during yet another late night at the office, you suddenly remember you have an important meeting the next morning, and you have to print out a forest of attachments and key documents to read on the way home?

Have you ever tried to locate a key Word document only to find that there are four different versions littering your PC, and goodness knows which one is the definitive version? Even worse, you can't find it because you can't remember if it's sitting in your attachments folder or if you filed it somewhere else?

Is email, apparently a tool for efficiency and effective communication, becoming the bane of your life?

If any of these scenarios seem familiar, then this UKOLUG meeting is for you. The day will focus on three key areas: email management, personal e-document management, and strategies for effective web information management and monitoring.

**Email:** practical tips and techniques for getting the most out of email, and taming that inbox.

**E-document management:** managing email attachments; tracking changes in documents, effective personal content management.

**Web:** useful tips for bookmark organisation, intelligent use of intelligent agents, Internet monitoring services.

There will also be a Q&A forum to launch a debate on the issues facing the profession in this area.

Full details and a booking form are now on the UKOLUG Web site at <http://www.ukolug.org.uk/>

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## Top 10 Business Information Resources

At the end of each of our Business Information on the Internet workshops we ask the delegates to compile a "Top 10 Business Sites" list. This is the list from the most recent course (9th February 2004). Previous Top 10's can be found at

<http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/top10/2001.htm>

1. Yahoo! and Yahoo! Finance <http://www.yahoo.co.uk/>. Useful Web directory, and free share price information and news on listed companies, including historical share prices.
2. Killerinfo <http://www.killerinfo.com/> - meta search tool that organises your results into topics. Quick Peek allows you to look at the web pages without leaving the results list.
3. Pinakes <http://www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW/irn/pinakes/pinakes.html> - provides links to evaluated listings on a wide range of subjects and industry sectors.
4. HM Treasury <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/> Excellent source for UK economic data and statistics.
5. Europages <http://www.europages.com/>. Free searchable directory of European companies.
6. BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/> for news, background information on a story/event, business news and markets, and country profiles (provided by BBC World Monitoring).
7. Governments on the Web <http://www.gksoft.com/govt/>. Comprehensive database of governmental institutions on the World Wide Web: parliaments, ministries, offices, law courts, embassies, city councils, public broadcasting corporations, central banks, multi-governmental institutions etc. Also includes political parties.
8. Bureau van Dijk free directory <http://www.bvdep.com/>. Free directory search of the 10.4 million companies contained in the BvD Suite. Free summary for every company gives you company

<http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/archives/2004/feb2004.shtml>

name, town, country, sector, registered number and size (very large, large, medium, small, very small)

9. Corporate Information  
<http://www.corporateinformation.com/>.  
Useful listing of sites by country and industry covering stock exchanges, company directories and sector based sites.
  10. RBA Business Information on the Net  
<http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/>. Our own listing of business information resources.
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## Copernic launches new tracking software

Copernic have launched a web page tracking application called Copernic Tracker.  
<http://www.copernic.com/en/products/tracker/>

Once installed on your PC, Copernic Tracker enables you to track any number of web pages on external web sites and on intranets. You can track changed words, new links or images in documents.

There is a useful advanced query form for tracking specific words within pages, Boolean and other search operators (AND, OR, NEAR).

Copies of page revisions are stored locally so that you can compare changes that occurred in the past and add your own notes for tracked pages and each of their revisions.

There is an option for importing favorites from Internet Explorer so that you do not have to key in lists of sites, but no facility for directly importing Mozilla/Netscape bookmarks or Opera Hot lists.

There are four preset tracking schedules: Multiple Times per Day, On a Daily Basis, On a Weekly Basis and On a Monthly Basis.

Alerts can be a tray icon, desktop alert or notification message, SMS notification, email report with the tracked page contents and changes highlighted.

Copernic Tracker costs USD 49.95

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## Information Resources

### Directories

#### Dot UK Directory

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

I came across this directory and web search service whilst "googling" on some UK industry sectors. It is a very useful UK focused directory and web search tool. You can drill down through the subject headings - arts, business, news and media etc. - or carry out a keyword search.

There is a nice "Get local" category with which you can narrow your search to county or even town level.

The default keyword search is "multiweb", the other separate options being Directory, Web, Ringtones and Logos, Books, and Auctions.

### Market Research

#### Research and Markets Newsletter

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

Research and Markets, based in Dublin, provides access to over 87,000 international market research reports. They have just re-launched their web site and a revamped email alerting service. Register free of charge on the site and you can select one or more categories - food and beverage, Internet and ecommerce, pharmaceuticals etc. - for monitoring.

The weekly emailed report includes details of the "Featured report of the week" and brief descriptions of other new market research reports on your chosen sector. This is a good way of keeping up to date with what is happening in your sectors of interest.

### Keeping up to date

#### Info@UK

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/Info@UK>

Info@UK is a monthly guide to major developments and news on the UK Information Society. It is compiled for the British Council by the Information Management Research Institute, Northumbria University but is also of interest to anyone working in the information profession.

Contents include new UK and International developments, research and innovation, Internet resources, new publications, conferences and seminars. It is available free of charge on the Web as Word and PDF documents and you can also receive the newsletter by email.

## Search Tools

**Zapmeta** <http://www.zapmeta.com/>

Zapmeta is a new meta search tool - a service that takes your search and runs it across several search engines at once. What distinguishes it from many of the other meta search tools are the range of search options and display features.

As well as being able to use the standard plus and minus signs, and double quote marks to make terms mandatory, exclude pages and force a phrase match, Zapmeta has an Advanced screen where you can limit your search by continent, domain or host. It also claims to support Boolean operators.

The results include a thumbnail or snapshot of the Web site, a link to older versions of the site on the Wayback machine (a feature copied from Gigablast), and a Quick View link (copied from Killerinfo) that displays the top part of the web page within the results list.

You can also sort your results by relevance (the default), popularity, title, source or domain.

Search tools currently covered include AOL, Teoma, Wisenut, Yahoo, MSN, AlltheWeb, Hotbot and Gigablast.

### Yahoo launches new search engine

Yahoo has ditched its Google powered web search results and launched a new search engine with its own index and ranking mechanisms. Yahoo acquired Inktomi about a year ago, but has not replaced the Google search with Inktomi. Instead it has developed a totally new search engine.

Yahoo is not revealing how big its database is but various search gurus have estimated that it is around 2 billion. As for content, the database holds the full text of web pages, up to 500K per page (Google's limit is 101K) and file types include PDF, and Microsoft Office.

## Miscellaneous

### Macmillan English Dictionary - New Words

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/resource/new.htm>

Every week, the Macmillan English Dictionary publishes a short article about a new word or phrase – or a new sense of an old word – to show what it means, how it's used and where it came from.

"New words will sometimes be frivolous, ephemeral and quickly forgotten. Others will be so important or useful that they remain in the language indefinitely."

At the end of February, they covered google-whacking.

I was alerted to this site by Ralph Adam who commented "Personally, I think google-whackers are poor searchers: otherwise they'd be able to refine their searches to get single hits anyway!"

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## Searching Questions

### Researching company directors

(The company and directors' names in this article have been changed to protect the guilty!)

#### Question:

I have been asked by my boss to check up on a UK company, Bodgeit and Floggit Ltd, with whom we may be doing a considerable amount of business. I have looked at their accounts for the last 4 years and they seem legitimate, but I can't help feeling that there is something dodgy about them. We've tried various credit report services but the wording on some of them is rather "wishy-washy". Are there any other avenues of research I can try?

#### Answer:

As well as researching the company itself, you really should be thoroughly investigating the directors as well. But first, I did a quick search on the company name in the free company search at Companies House (<http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/>). I found several companies with similar names

including Bodget and Floggit Holdings and Bodget, Floggit and Squander. All are registered at the same address. This is not suspicious in itself but I would suggest that you take a look at these other companies as well.

The easiest way to research UK directors is to via services such as ICC Plum (<http://www.icc.co.uk/>) or Bureau van Dijk's Fame (<http://www.bvdep.com/>). These repackage Companies House data and sometimes add extra information. You can quickly pull up a list of companies of which a person is a director and investigate the status of those companies. They are both subscription services and it may not be worth setting up an account with them if you do not carry out this type of research on a regular basis.

The ICC data is available on a pay as you go basis through other sites such as Accounting Web (<http://www.accountingweb.co.uk/>) or the LawZone (<http://www.lawzone.co.uk/>). It is straightforward enough to print off lists of companies of which Messrs Bodget, Floggit and Squander are directors. The lists make interesting reading.

Every so often our gang of three set up a group of companies. There is nothing suspicious in the accounts or obviously wrong in the way they are run. After about 3-4 years they dissolve the companies, usually when they are starting to make a loss, and set up a similar but new group of companies. They appear to have done this 6 times over the last 25 years.

Even more interesting are the numerous companies that were in totally unrelated industries and of which at least one of them was a director. There is a very obvious pattern of our friends resigning their directorships of these companies about 10-16 months before the companies were dissolved or go into liquidation.

Although the official documents do not reveal anything illegal, the unusual pattern of company formations and dissolutions associated with these directors would make me wary of doing business with them.

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## These things are sent to try us!

### Email disclaimers - the antidote

Annoyed by one line email messages that have 50 line disclaimers? Fed up of having to wade through disclaimers at the **start** of a message? Wendy Grossman certainly is and has come up with this brilliant corporate anti-disclaimer:

"This email is not and cannot, by its nature, be confidential. En route from me to you, it will pass across the public Internet, easily readable by any number of system administrators along the way."

"If you have received this message by mistake, it would be ridiculous for me to tell you not to read it or copy to anyone else, because, let's face it, if it's a message revealing confidential information or that could embarrass me intensely, that's precisely what you'll do. Who wouldn't?"

"Likewise, it is superfluous for me to claim copyright in the contents, because I own that anyway, even if you print out a hard copy or disseminate this message all over the known universe. I don't know why so many corporate mail servers feel impelled to attach a disclaimer to the bottom of every email message saying otherwise. If you don't know either, why not email your corporate lawyers and system administrators and ask them why they insist on contributing so much to the waste of bandwidth."

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/wendyg/2003/11/03/>

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## Meetings and Workshops

### Forthcoming Courses

**Workshop:** Assessing the Quality of Information

**Organiser:** TFPL

**Presenter:** Karen Blakeman

**Venue:** TFPL, London

**Date:** Tuesday, 9th March 2004

**Course fee:** GBP 295.00 + VAT (GBP 346.63)

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

This course provides a step by step guide to assessing and evaluating the quality of information. 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.

**Workshop:** Current Legal Issues in Information Work: Key Areas And What You Need to Know

**Organiser:** UKOLUG

**Presenters:** Charles Oppenheim, and Laurence W. Bebbington.

**Venue:** Ulidia Resource Centre, Belfast

**Date:** Tuesday, 6th April 2004, 09.30 – 17.00

**Course fee:** UKOLUG members: £130 + VAT (£152.75) others: £160 + VAT (£188)

**URL:** <http://www.ukolug.org.uk/>

This one day overview seeks to raise awareness and knowledge of some of the main areas of concern for information workers. Key issues and fundamentals will be covered in areas of universal concern such as copyright and data protection. The focus in all areas will be on equipping attendees with the information that they really need to have or be aware of while also dealing with specific issues of current concern. One session will be devoted to identifying and managing risks and developing appropriate policies.

**Workshop:** How to assess, select and manage electronic resources.

**Organiser:** Manchester Business School

**Presenter:** Karen Blakeman

**Venue:** MBS, Manchester

**Date:** Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004

**Course fee:** GBP 215 + VAT - BIS/BINN members. Others GBP 250 + VAT.

**URL:** <http://www.mbs.ac.uk/corporate/bis/html/training.cfm>

This one day seminar provides a step-by-step guide to setting up a resource management strategy. Topics covered include: identifying resources already in use within the organisation; organisational IT issues and policies affecting information use; identifying and assessing both free and fee-based services; monitoring usage and maintaining resources.

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