Tales from the Terminal Room
January 2004, Issue No. 49

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

http://www.rba.co.uk/tfttr/

Tales from the Terminal Room (TFTTR) is a monthly newsletter, with the exception of July and August which are published as a single issue. TFTTR 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.

In this issue:

Google and AlltheWeb look for variations on search terms

Eagle eyed searchers will have spotted that Google (http://www.google.com/) now automatically searches for variations on your search terms. For example, carry out a search on air pollution and Google will also find pages that contain the terms pollute, polluting, pollutant etc. This is not always helpful, so to stop the stemming and force an exact match precede your search term or phrase with a plus sign.

AlltheWeb (http://www.alltheweb.com/) also now stems your search terms if there is more than one in your strategy. Unlike Google, though, there appears to be no way of switching it off.

Top 10 Search Tips

At the end of every search strategies workshop that we run, we ask the delegates to come up with what they found to be the most useful search tips. Below is a compilation of the top 10 tips from delegates over the last three to four months.

Although mentioned in passing in tip number 10, many delegates found that the meta search tool Killerinfo (http://www.killerinfo.com/) sometimes works better than Google! It also sorts your pages into topics and has a great "Quick peek" function for previewing pages from within the results list.

1. Try and imagine how your perfect page would look and search for terms you would like to appear in that page.

2. Use double quote marks around phrases to look for words immediately next to one another, for example "air quality" to search for air immediately followed by quality.

3. Use the minus sign (-) before a term to exclude pages that contain that particular term, and the plus sign (+) before "stop words" - for example to, the, of, and, with - if you want them included as part of your search.

4. Search for similar pages once you have found a really good page. Look for "similar pages", "related pages" or "more like this" next to entries in any search engine's results list. Alternatively use the Page Specific Search on the Google Advanced Search screen.

5. Search for pages that have links to a known page. This gives you an idea of the authority of a page by showing who links to it and is also a way of finding similar types of pages (pages with similar content tend to link to one another).

   Use AlltheWeb and type the URL into the search box, the Google Advanced Search or the Google Toolbar Page Info, Backward links option.

6. Limit by type of file. Use this to limit your search to file formats such as PDF, Word, Excel. Industry and market information, and major reports are often buried on web sites as non-HTML files.

7. Limit by type of site or domain to look for a specific type of organisation, for example .gov.uk for UK government, ac.uk for UK academic sites, edu for US higher education. Use the Google Advanced Search.

8. Make use of the Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT where appropriate.

9. Have a look at the Advanced Search screens in your search tools for a greater range of search options.

10. Try different search tools, for example Google(http://www.google.com/), AlltheWeb(http://www.alltheweb.com/), AltaVista (http://www.av.com/).

    Try a meta search tool to search across several search tools at once for example Killerinfo (http://www.killerinfo.com/), Kartoo(http://www.kartoo.com/).

EEVL launches OneStep Industry and Jobs News services

EEVL has launched two free news services: OneStep Industry News (http://www.eevl.ac.uk/onestepnews/) and OneStep Jobs News (http://www.eevl.ac.uk/onestepjobs/)

Using RSS (Really Simple Syndication) technology, the OneStep services aggregate the latest headlines and announcements from top sources covering the mathematics, engineering and computing sectors and present them in an easily accessible format. Direct links take the user to the complete full text on participating publishers' own web sites.

The problem with sector specific news feeds and services is that they are dotted around all over the Internet and remembering where they are can be a nightmare. The OneStep service aims to bring them together.

Included in OneStep Industry News are headlines from: e4engineering.com, Buildingtalk, Manufacturingtalk, Electronicstalk, Nature - Materials Update, Moreover, LTSN Engineering, LTSN Materials, the Institute of Physics, scenta, LTSN Maths, The Register, Slashdot, Nanodot, and general technology newsfeeds such as BBC Tech News and CNN Technology. More sources will be added in the future.

OneStep Jobs provides a similar function for the latest job announcements in engineering, mathematics and computing. Included in OneStep Jobs News are announcements from Jobsite, theengineerjobs.co.uk, jobs.ac.uk, Institute of Physics (Nanotechweb.org Jobs), and Perl Jobs.

Information Resources

Market Research on the Web

Many of us wept when IRN Research pulled their list of trade associations from their web site. It wasn't just a useful list of trade association web sites - it also told you whether the sites had statistics and member directories. It was a fantastic time saver.

Well it's back, but as a subscription service called Market Research on the Web (http://www.marketresearchontheweb.com/) or MROW.

MROW provides direct links to market data, company lists, statistics, and industry news on over 3,000 regularly evaluated UK and European sites. These sites include associations and professional bodies, trade journals, research companies, consultants, and industry sites and portals.

Many of the sites offer free access to data and statistics, and MROW subscribers have quick, direct links to this information. Sites included in MROW are European sites offering either statistics, company lists, industry news, or links to other relevant sites. The database is searchable by sector, keyword, or geographical area, or any combination of these.

There is also a guide to the terminologies, concepts, classifications, and statistical devices used in market research and statistical analysis.

The annual subscription varies according to type of organisation and number of users. Rates start at start at GBP 150 for academic and public libraries and go up to GBP 1,250 for over 100 corporate users or enterprise-wide access.

A free 7 day trial is available.

Searching Questions

Historical Share Prices

Question:
Where might I find historical daily stock prices, in particular going back to the 1980's for the London Stock Exchange? I need actual prices rather than the historical graphs that most share price services provide. Oh, and the enquirer does not want to pay for the information!

Answer:
The Finance section of Yahoo UK (http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/) gives historical daily prices for some of the major markets and for the London Stock Exchange going back to 1986.

Type in the symbol or name of the company in which you are interested. This will take you

to a table giving a summary for the company. In the lower right hand corner of the table you will see a link to historical prices. The data includes daily opening and closing prices, high and low prices for each day, and volume. You can also download the data in spreadsheet format.

An alternative is BigCharts (http://www.bigcharts.com/) who provide historical prices for the major markets but only for the past decade. If you have a specific date in mind, simply type in the symbol of the company (there is a symbol lookup box if you do not know it) and the date. Alternatively, use the Java chart option to display a graph of the last 10 years of prices. Move your mouse cursor along the graph and the price on that day is displayed.

Both of these services only provide information on companies that are currently trading. If you need information on a company that has merged with another or has ceased trading you will have to resort to priced services such as DataStream (http://www.datastream.com/)

Gizmo of the Month

WisdomChange for monitoring changes to web pages

http://www.wisdomchange.com/

WisdomChange is a free service that monitors changes to web pages and sends notifications by email.

You first sign up to the service with an email address and password. Then simply set up a list of "bookmarks". WisdomChange monitors your bookmarks and when they change, it marks the changes and sends you an email. Only changes to the text of a web page are detected: changes in HTML tags or images are not. A neat feature is that you can also have the notifications sent to your mobile phone or pager.

There is no limit on the number of bookmarks that you can set up. WisdomChange does not monitor entire sites, though, only individual pages.

Features to be added soon include an option to import bookmarks and keyword searching

Meetings and Workshops

Forthcoming Courses

Workshop: Business Information on the Net: free vs. fee
Organiser: TFPL
Presenter: Karen Blakeman
Venue: TFPL, London
Date: Monday, 9th February 2004
Course fee: GBP 295.00 + VAT (GBP 346.63)
URL: http://www.tfpl.com/
This one day course compares what is available for free with pay-as-you-go and subscription services and will examine quality of content, coverage, functionality and price.

Seminar: Usability Testing
Organiser: UKOLUG
Seminar leader: Martin White
Venue: CILIP, London
Date: Thursday 12th February 2004, 9.30-12.30
Course fee: UKOLUG Members GBP 60 + VAT (GBP 70.50), others GBP 75 + VAT (GBP 88.12). Price includes refreshments but not lunch.
URL: http://www.ukolug.org.uk/
This seminar will cover the basic principles of usability testing of both web sites and intranets including:

- heuristic evaluation
- cognitive walk-throughs
- task-based testing
- resources on usability testing

The basic principles of web accessibility will also be included in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Seminar: Blogs and Wikis
Organiser: UKOLUG
Seminar leader: Martin White
Venue: CILIP, London
Date: Thursday 12th February 2004, 13.30-16.30
Course fee: UKOLUG Members GBP 60 + VAT (GBP 70.50), others GBP 75 + VAT (GBP 88.12). Price includes refreshments but not lunch.
URL: http://www.ukolug.org.uk/
This seminar will provide an introduction to blogs and wikis, including technology options and applications.

Among the topics to be covered will be:

- the development of blogs
- blog software
- implementation issues
- searching blogs
- useful blogs for information professionals
- wiki and T-wiki applications

Seminar: Perspectives on Information Architecture
Organiser: UKOLUG, with the support of the Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture
Venue: CILIP, London
Date: Thursday 12th February 2004, 13.30-16.30
Course fee: UKOLUG and AIfIA members: GBP 130 + VAT (GBP 152.75) Others: GBP 160 + VAT (GBP 188. Includes lunch and refreshments.
URL: http://www.ukolug.org.uk/
The primary objective of this meeting is to illustrate the diversity of perspectives on the role and value of information architecture, and in particular assess the relevance for library and information professionals.

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.

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/tfttr/archives/

Subscribe and Unsubscribe

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

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

If you wish to change your subscription from the PDF to the Plain Text version, send an email to tfttr@rba.co.uk with "Plain Text Version Please" in the subject line.

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.