

# 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; resources dealing with technical and access issues on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications.

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## AltaVista dumbs down

Many of us knew it would happen sooner rather than later: search engine AltaVista has dumbed down.

AltaVista (<http://www.av.com/>) and AlltheWeb (<http://www.alltheweb.com/>) are both ultimately owned by Yahoo and the industry has long been expecting there to be changes. For some months now, AltaVista has been using AlltheWeb's databases but it did at least retain some unique search features: wildcards and the very useful NEAR command. Both have now gone along with the related pages (like: ) and the filetype command, although you can still search specific file formats via the Advanced Search screen.

It is now just a copy of AlltheWeb. RIP AltaVista.☹

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## Sinking in the information bog!

*The following is taken from a press release issued by Rob Hughes of UKOLUG - the UK e-information group. I must declare an interest in this as I am Hon. Sec. of UKOLUG and wrote some of the fact sheets that are mentioned. Nevertheless, I hope readers will find some of the resources that are mentioned useful.*

UKOLUG, the UK e-information group and professional body for users and developers of electronic information resources, have experienced great interest in their newly designed web-pages (<http://www.ukolug.org.uk/>). Particularly popular have been their wide-ranging free factsheets, including one on blocking pop-up windows whilst you are on the web ([http://www.ukolug.org.uk/content/public/factsheets/popup\\_blocking](http://www.ukolug.org.uk/content/public/factsheets/popup_blocking)), which has proved a particular favourite. Their other free fact sheets, including ones on 'Spyware' and 'Intranet success factors', have also proved of great interest to surfers.

Searches on the site have included some fairly standard online user interests, including 'bibliographic software' and 'e-commerce'. There have been some more unusual searches though. Whoever was searching for an 'information bog' may have simply misspelt 'blog' or, perhaps, may have been

caught sinking under information overload. The UKOLUG course, "I'm an information professional - get me out of here!" would perhaps be helpful to them.

However, whoever found themselves looking for 'basketball' and 'basketball shoes' on the UK e-Information Group pages must have been desperate, and ultimately sadly disappointed.

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## Information Resources

### Database of phishing scams

Phishing scams are emails that purport to come from legitimate institutions such as banks, building societies, eBay etc claiming that you must confirm your customer login details in order to continue accessing your account. When you click on the link, you are taken to what looks like the legitimate site but it is in fact a fake. If you supply your customer details to the fake site, you may suddenly find that the money in your bank account has been hoovered up by a crook.

There is now a database and information site about phishing at <http://www.antiphishing.org/>. As well as archives of reported scams there are phishing trends, information on phishing meetings and news, and resources (whitepapers, advice, corporate anti-fraud policies).

The database itself has examples listed by date, the company being faked and the title of the phish. Additional information is available including scam target, e-mail format, goal, visible link, email screen shots, and general comments.

### National copyright laws online

UNESCO has provided the full texts of national copyright and related rights legislation of UNESCO Member States under its Culture Sector pages at <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/>.

It covers about 100 documents and is organised by continent and region, and then by country. It does seem rather odd, though, that North America is combined with Europe!

## Complete RSS

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

Whether you are looking for a news feed for your web site or just want to be kept up to date on a subject, CompleteRSS is one of many search tools that can help. There is a list of topics and sample news feeds on the home page - technology, business and finance, world news - but you can also keyword search. A search on "business" brought up a list with the whole range of the BBC news feeds at the top. Try not to be too clever with the search option, though. A search on business UK only gave one hit and it looks as though it only searches the title, URL and a one sentence of the description taken from the feed.

The entries in the results list give the name of feed, description, URL, and a link to the code for the feed.

## Directories

### Directory of UK company directors

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

Published by Hemscott, this publication is available online and in print. It covers over 41,000 directors and 12,000 companies. Profiles can include: photograph of director; career history; qualifications; major current directorships; other directorships; address, phone & fax number; email and web addresses; places of education. The address given is the main place of work of a director. If he or she has multiple directorships, this will not necessarily be the 'main' directorship held, but will be the address at which an individual can most easily be contacted. This is a subscription service.

## Country Specific Information

### Resource directory for East and Southeast Asia

<http://newton.uor.edu/Departments&Programs/AsianStudiesDept/index.html>

Compiled by Professor Robert Eng of the University of Redlands, this site does what it says on the tin: provides a directory of resources covering east and southeast Asia.

Countries covered are: China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and Mongolia, Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines,

<http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/archives/2004/may2004.shtml>

Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. For each country, resources are annotated and listed by type for example General Information, News, Government Offices, Business and Economy. Business and Economy includes statistics, trading information and company information. The resources may be local, from an organisation in another country or regional and International organisations.

This is a useful directory from someone who has a keen interest in the area. Bob Eng teaches on East Asian civilizations and Asian-American history; modern China and Japan; Pacific Rim; and business and entrepreneurship.

The layout and design of the pages is a bit "busy" in places, but graphics are kept to the minimum and the content is good.

### NationMaster

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

This site is produced by Rapid Intelligence Pty Ltd, an online publishing company based in Sydney, Australia. It repackages information from many different sources including the CIA World Factbook, World Bank, WHO, FAO (there is a **very** long list of sources on the web site). You can compare data in a variety of ways. For example you can select your own specific countries, a region, or an economic group such as OPEC and then a category and statistic for that category.

The sources used for each comparison are listed and you can quickly change from totals to per capita figures, which are often more meaningful. Carry out a search for total number of burglaries in European countries and the UK comes top of the list, but change it to per capita and the UK drops to fourth place with Denmark at the top.

There is also a list of "top graphs" ranging from the most taxed to the most corrupt. The Vatican City comes out as the most taxed at USD 190450.05 per person, while the UK bumbles along at number 19 at USD 9401.83. I'll leave you to look up the most corrupt and how it is calculated!

I had great fun with this and am still testing it, but already it is proving to be a fantastic site for country statistics and comparisons of all sorts.

## Share Prices

### CAROL launches stock price lookup

CAROL (Company Annual Reports Online) known primarily for its direct links to annual reports on company web sites has teamed up with AXL, a corporate financial data provider, to provide share price information on companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange.

There is information on over 1000 companies and a top 100 stocks summary table can be accessed at

[http://www.carolworld.com/stocks\\_top100.php](http://www.carolworld.com/stocks_top100.php)

For information outside of the top 100 there is a search option at

[http://www.carolworld.com/stocks\\_lse.php](http://www.carolworld.com/stocks_lse.php)

The information includes current price (delayed by 15 minutes), change, volume, high, low, close, 52 week high and low. Intraday charts are available as are historic charts (default is 1 year). Charts can be set to various time periods from 1 month to 5 years, or to all available data (back to 1997 for the companies we looked at).

There is less information than one finds on Yahoo Finance, but it is more than adequate if you just want a quick snapshot of a company's performance. As far as comparison's are concerned, you can compare a company against the FTSE 100, 250, 350 or All share; or against AIM, Techmark 100 or Techmark Allshare. What is often more useful is the ability to compare against the sector or another company; this is available in Yahoo Finance but not on CAROL.

## Government

### Archive of UK government web sites

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/webarchive/>

You may have heard of the Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org/>) which attempts to archive all types of web sites world-wide, but did you know that they are helping the Public Records Office develop an archive of UK government sites?

The UK Central Government Web Archive is a "selective" collection of 51 of the current 2,500 UK Government sites and chosen as

being "a representative sample". So you may find that some of the juicier or more embarrassing bits of information that you vaguely recall seeing a couple of years ago may not be included.

The sites are harvested at varying intervals: 10 are harvested every week and the remaining 41 every six months. The archive goes back to 2003

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## Searching Questions

### Translating foreign language news articles

#### Question

We access a large number of foreign newspapers directly via the publishers' own web sites as many sources are not covered by Factiva or LexisNexis. Some are only available in the language of that country and we do not always have a member of staff who can translate them. In particular, we are looking at Russian, and Central and Eastern Europe news sources. Are there any free or reasonably priced translation services that we could use?

#### Answer

I would first double check that the newspaper site in question really does not have English pages. These are not always clearly signposted so have a good look round the home page. ABYZ News Links (<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/>) lists newspapers by country and includes links to any alternative language versions, including English.

BBC World Monitoring may cover some of the articles you are interested in. The articles are translated into English and indexed by World Monitoring staff. The service at <http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/> is subscription only but there is a pay-as-you-go service at <http://www.newsbaseworldmonitoring.com/>.

There are several free translation services on the Web. AltaVista's Babelfish at <http://babelfish.altavista.com/> is limited in the translation pairs it supports but does include Russian to English. There is a list of other services at:

<http://www.rba.co.uk/fttr/archives/2004/may2004.shtml>

Online Dictionaries and Translators  
(<http://www.word2word.com/dictionary.html>),

and

The Translation Guide  
(<http://www.translation-guide.com/>).

Do remember that these use **machine** translation so the results are sometimes very odd. They do give you a rough idea of the content of a page, but if the information is critical you really should find a human translator.

## Gizmo of the Month

### Mailwasher

<http://www.mailwasher.net/>

I was recommended this excellent tool by a TFFTR reader. Not only does it identify and bounce emails of porcine origin sent to randomly generated mailbox names at your domain, but it also has excellent options for spotting and removing the aforementioned unwanted processed pink stuff from your mail server.

The free version previews your emails, and enables you to delete at source those that you do not want. Known luncheon meat and blacklisted addresses are automatically marked for deletion, but you can easily unmark them if you really do want the message or if Mailwasher makes a mistake. So far, I have had no false positives.

If you have a Hotmail, MSN or AOL account, or have several email addresses that you would like to check, you have to purchase an upgrade costing USD 37. You can try out the software for 30 days before you buy. The upgrade also gives you access to the First Alert Database to which you can send tinned gunk that manages to bypass the system, and the learning filter is enabled.

## Meetings and Workshops

**Meeting:** I'm an Information Professional - get me out of here!

**Organiser:** UKOLUG

**Speakers:** Karen Blakeman, Phil Bradley, Clare Cowling

**Venue:** CILIP, London

**Date:** Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004

**Course fee:** GBP 135 + VAT for UKOLUG members. Others GBP 160 + VAT.

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

This meeting will focus on three key areas that are main contributors to information overload: email management, personal e-document management, and strategies for effective web information management and monitoring.

**Workshop:** Business Information on the Internet: Free vs. Fee

**Organiser:** TFPL

**Presenter:** Karen Blakeman

**Venue:** TFPL, London

**Date:** Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004

**Course fee:** GBP 295 + VAT (Total GBP346.63)

**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. There will be practical sessions throughout the day and delegates will receive comprehensive notes.

**Workshop:** Key Business Sources on the Net

**Organiser:** Manchester Business School

**Presenter:** Karen Blakeman

**Venue:** MBS, Manchester

**Date:** Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2004

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

**URL:**

<http://www.mbs.ac.uk/corporate/bis/training.htm>

This one day course is similar to the course run in London at TFPL, but tends to be biased towards the needs of SMEs and niche market information. It compares what is available for free with pay-as-you-go and subscription services and examines quality of content, coverage and functionality. There are practical sessions throughout the day

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