



Tales from the Terminal Room

May 2005, Issue No. 62

Editor: Karen Blakeman

Published by: RBA Information Services

ISSN 1467-338X

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

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; search tools; resources dealing with technical and access problems on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications.

In this issue:

- TFTTR and RSS
 - Inforum 2005, Prague
 - Search Tools
 - Yagoohoo!gle becomes Twingine
 - Ask Jeeves introduces Zoom and Web Answers
 - Yahoo! Mindset
 - Google Print
 - Dogpile Missing Pieces
 - Subject Finder - Search for Educational Subjects & Information
 - Blinkx.tv - update
 - Information Resources
 - Top 10 business sites and tips
 - Zephyr M&A coverage increased
 - Mindbranch - RSS feeds
 - EEVL Xtra
 - AskOxford
 - Searching Questions
 - Free web sites for locating where a company is registered
 - Gizmo of the Month
 - Turbo 10
 - Meetings and Workshops
 - Untangling Your Web: Effective Web Site Management (Manchester)
 - Business Information on the Internet: Free vs. Fee (London)
-

TFTTR and RSS

A reminder to readers that Tales from the Terminal Room is now available as an RSS feed. The URL for the feed is <http://www.rba.co.uk/rss/tftr.xml>.

Further information on RSS feeds can be found at <http://www.rba.co.uk/rss/rss.htm> and Wikipedia has a good article on the topic at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_for_mat%29.

If you decide to go down this route and already receive TFTTR by email you can remove yourself from the email distribution list by going to <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/> and filling in the form, making sure to check the unsubscribe button before submitting it.

Inforum 2005, Prague

If you missed Inforum 2005, held in Prague on May 24th - 26th, the conference papers are now available at <http://www.inforum.cz/inforum2005/english/sbornik.php>. Notes and Powerpoint slides from my workshop "Top Tips for expert Searching" are at the bottom of the page.

Photos are also available at <http://www.inforum.cz/inforum2005/English/galerie.php> and at the IKAROS online journal: <http://www.ikaros.cz/images/2005Inforum/kulovary2/index.htm> and http://www.ikaros.cz/images/2005Inforum/info_galerie/index.htm

This was my first visit to Inforum and as well as learning a lot from both the presenters and the delegates, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Inforum 2006 takes place on May 23rd to the 25th. Although some of the papers are presented in Czech, it does not matter if you do not speak the language; simultaneous translations are available.

Search Tools

YaGoohoo!gle becomes Twingine

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

YaGoohoo!gle, mentioned in the April edition of TFTTR, has become Twingine. It has the same features (compares Google and Yahoo side by side) but the title and URL are much easier to remember!

If you are into comparing search tools side by side try Graball (<http://www.graball.com/>), which offers a wider range of options.

Ask Jeeves Introduces Zoom and Web Answers

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

Zoom (subtitled Concept Navigation) "offers suggestions to narrow and refine your search ("zooming in"), or expand your search ("zooming out") to explore new ideas." The Zoom suggestions should appear on the right hand side of your results page. I found that if you carry out a fairly precise search such as my 'gin vodka sales UK' test search, nothing appears in the Zoom section. A search on 'climate change', though, suggests that I might like to narrow my search to global warming, global warming causes, global warming impact etc. Alternatively, it suggests I could expand my search using strategies such as Kyoto Protocol, Ice Age theory.

The new Web Answers claims to extend "Ask Jeeves' direct-answering abilities by mining unstructured data in real time." This part of Ask Jeeves is apparently triggered by questions, phrases or keywords for example "how.....". "what.....". I tried what I thought was a straightforward question - how fast can a hippopotamus swim? It did not help that the top five results were sponsored web results for swim wear and swimsuits at Marks and Spencers. Ten minutes later and when I had stopped laughing I found that none of the "real" links gave me an answer and the Zoom option to narrow my search suggested two queries: how many bones does a hippopotamus have and how fast can a hippopotamus run. Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) comes up with a

possible and credible answer (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippopotamus>) straight away.

"Why is the grass green", a test search suggested to me by Neil Infield, did not do much better until I had worked through two levels of the Zoom searches. The first results were offering me lawn care services, grass seed and astro turf.

In conclusion, I found Zoom to be a useful additional tool. If it does not appear next to your results list then that suggests you are already running quite a precise search. As for Web Answers - pass me that hippo sized swimsuit, I've obviously had too many gin and vodka cocktails:-)

Yahoo! Mindset

<http://mindset.research.yahoo.com/>

"View Yahoo! Search results sorted according to whether they are more commercial or more informational (i.e., from academic, non-commercial, or research-oriented sources)."

I really like this one. Type in your search and Yahoo! Mindset gives you the first 10 results with a slider bar at the top of the page. At one end of the bar is "shopping" and at the other "researching". You start off in the middle and can slide the bar in either direction to change the emphasis.

A test search on 'gin vodka sales UK' actually came up with a good result at number 1 with the slider in the middle - the Gin and Vodka Association (yes, there really is one and their site has some good statistics!). Moving the slider towards 'researching' started to move the Gin & Vodka Association down the list but brought in equally interesting data I might otherwise have missed. As expected, moving the slider towards 'shopping' brought up sites selling gin and/or vodka, books on Amazon telling me how to make gin and vodka cocktails and a site with the wonderful name of Dinky Drinks!

More research orientated strategies such as 'climate change' and 'hubbert peak oil' were not as varied and the shopping side was more about books on the subject. What this did highlight, though, was that shifting the bar

in either direction significantly altered the results that appeared in the top 10 and presented pages that one might not have normally seen.

Highly recommended.

Google Print

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

At last Google Print has its own search screen and you can search the whole database. Previously, you had to use the standard search screen and use the strategy 'books about...' whatever you were interested in and even then it only displayed three titles. Google have warned that there is a large backlog of books to be added, so do not be too upset if you have submitted a publication and it is not yet included.

Dogpile Missing Pieces

<http://missingpieces.dogpile.com/missingpiecestool.aspx>

A neat little tool from meta search tool Dogpile that compares the top 10 results from Google, Yahoo and Ask Jeeves. The graphic shows how many results are in only 1, 2 or in all 3 search engines for a particular search and includes sponsored links from the top of the pages. Dogpile have also produced a white paper (PDF format) on the subject entitled Missing Pieces: A Study of First Page Web Search Engine Results Overlap.

The findings are no great surprise to many of us but it is always useful to have our experiences confirmed by experimental data. I find that the degree of overlap varies with the search: sometimes it can be as low as 2-3% in the first 100 results whilst on other occasions it can be as high as 90%.

If you want to compare a wider range of search tools and their top 100 results try Thumbshots Ranking (<http://ranking.thumbshots.com/>)

Subject Finder - Search for Educational Subjects & Information

<http://bb.1asphost.com/subjectfinder/>

I found this site via the Internet Resources Newsletter: Issue 129

(<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libwww/irn/irn129/irn129.html>)

"Subject Finder is developed by Teum Teklehaimanot to help students, teachers and lecturers find educational websites easily without being overwhelmed with a huge number of search results. It is designed to search only educational websites which contain tutorials, learning and teaching materials such as Accounting, Arts and Design, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computing, Construction, Counselling, Economics, Electronics, Engineering, Geography, Health, History, Law, Languages, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Reference, Science, Social Science, Sociology, Travel, etc."

You can browse by subject or carry out a keyword search. Although the site says that it searches only educational web sites, that does not mean it is restricted to academic pages. I found some good quality resources on a number of topics from organisations such as trade and professional associations. I am definitely adding this service to my collection of "specialty" search tools.

Blinkx.tv - update

<http://www.blinkx.tv/>

Having extolled the virtues of the radio broadcast transcripts in the April TFFTTR, I recently discovered that BBC radio is no longer available via Blinkx :- (There are still plenty of television broadcasts, though, to keep a news junkie like me happy.

Information Resources

Top 10 business sites and tips

At the end of each of our business information workshops we ask the delegates to come up with a list of Top 10 sites. At the June event held at Manchester Business School, the delegates could not agree when it came to narrowing down their collective list to 10, so we allowed them a round dozen. Interestingly, a number of these were search strategies rather than individual sites.

1. RBA Business Information on the Net <http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/> My own listing of business resources by type. Inevitable that it should be nominated. We use it throughout the day as a "jumping off" point and by the end of the workshop the delegates have been totally brainwashed into using it :-)
2. Use specialist tools such as Scirus <http://www.scirus.com/> and Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/> for peer reviewed articles and invisible web resources.
3. Try Google's "similar pages" search feature to look for pages that are similar in content to a page that you have already found.
4. Use the link commands to search for pages that link to a page that you have already found. Pages that are similar in content tend to link to one another and this trick often picks up annotated and evaluated listings of sites on a subject. The Yahoo! linkdomain command is the most comprehensive. Syntax is linkdomain:www.sitename.com e.g. linkdomain:www.ukeig.org.uk
5. Buslib-L discussion list - <http://listserv.boisestate.edu/archives/buslib-l.html> - an electronic forum that addresses all issues relating to the collection, storage, and dissemination of Business Information within a library setting regardless of format. Excellent resource for tapping into expertise world-wide.
6. Europages - <http://www.europages.com/> - free directory of over 550,000 companies in 35 countries

7. Turboscout - <http://www.turboscout.com/> - enables you to quickly run your search in several web, blog and reference search tools one by one.

8. Twingine - <http://www.twingine.com/> - compares results from Google and Yahoo side by side.

9. Nationmaster
<http://www.nationmaster.com/> - a good starting point for statistics that repackages information from many different sources and generates tables and rankings.

10. Kompass - <http://www.kompass.com/> - database of 1.9m companies in 75 countries with excellent options for searching by sector and product.

11. Search within a site - use this advanced search feature to search within large sites that have appalling navigation or poor inbuilt search facilities. Available with most of the major search engines on the Advanced Search screens.

12. Abyz News Links
<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/> - fast-loading site that lists over 15,600 newspapers and other news sources by country and by region within each country

Zephyr M&A coverage increased

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

Bureau van Dijk's M&A database, Zephyr, has been increased to more than 300,000 deals. Zephyr contains information on M&A, IPO and private equity deals and includes company financials. In addition to current deal information, historical deal information has been added for Asia and other regions. There is now five years of global coverage. Deals involving US or European companies go back to the beginning of 1997. More information on Zephyr can be found on the BvD web site or by calling +44 20 7549 5000.

MindBranch - RSS Feeds

<http://www.mindbranch.com/catalog/rssfeeds.jsp>

MindBranch, a market research aggregator, is now offering RSS feeds that alert users to new reports in specific industry sectors. There is a separate feed setup for each branch and industry in the MindBranch catalog. Each feed contains the title, description, publication date, and a link to detailed information on the 10 most recent reports published.

EEVL Xtra

<http://www.eevlxtra.ac.uk/>

A new service from EEVL that helps you find articles, key websites, books, the latest industry news, job announcements, ejournals, eprints, technical reports, and the latest research in engineering, mathematics, and computing. EEVL Xtra searches databases and resources that most search engines miss.

AskOxford

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

This free online dictionary resource from OUP offers a Word of the Day, Quote of the Week, games and a Frequently asked Questions section. The last includes a link to Collective Terms for Animals (<http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/collective/?view=uk>) - useful for settling arguments and checking your pub quiz Q&A. We were having a heated discussion regarding the correct collective noun for a group of hippopotamuses. Yes, sad, isn't it? We had a laptop and mobile coms but a Google search came up with all sorts of terms, some of them hotly disputed. Where do we Brits go to in situations such as this? Answer - the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Unfortunately, we could not access my own multi volume hard copy but AskOxford came up with the answer, or rather answers. For the record, a group of hippos can be a pod, a bloat, a herd or a school. Now you know!

Searching Questions

Free web sites for locating where a company is registered

Question:

Are there any free web sites that identify the country in which a company is registered?

Answer:

Try the free directory at <http://www.bvdep.com/>. Click on the "Free directory" link and enter the company name. The results list gives you the name, sector, town, country and official company registration number. It is by no means comprehensive, though, and for some countries does not cover the smaller companies.

Another directory to try is Kompass at <http://www.kompass.com/>. Click on the Company Name tab, leave the region as world-wide and type in the company. Again it is far from comprehensive but often picks up the smaller companies. The free information includes company name, address, telephone and fax numbers. More detailed data can be bought on a pay as you go basis. A completely free directory worth looking at is Europages (<http://www.europages.com/>) but as its name suggests it is restricted to Europe.

All of these will of course pick up all companies with the same name or partial name as your target company, so you'll need to make sure you are looking at the right company. Once you have identified the country, you can then go to the official company register for further information. A country by country list can be found at the Commercial Register Office of the Canton St. Gallen (<http://www.hrasg.ch/eng/welt-e.htm>) and on the Companies House site at <http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/links/introduction.shtml#reg>. Some registers make the information freely available whilst others charge on a pay as you go basis or up front subscription.

Gizmo of the Month

Turbo 10

<http://www.turbo10.com/>

I wasn't sure whether this should go in the Search Tools section or be listed as a "Gizmo". I decided on the latter because this meta search tools lets you build your own meta search collection. Turbo10 has a list of over 800 sites and search tools in its database from which you can build your meta search collection. For example, I have set up a group of blog search tools such as Blogarama, Feedster, Technorati. If your favourite search tool is not in the list, click on Add a Search Engine and a wizard takes you through the steps need to add the site. You may find, though, that the search tool you want to add is structured in such a way that Turbo10 cannot create an interface to it.

The main drawback of Turbo 10 is that your "collections" are stored in a cookie on your machine. If you clear out your cookies periodically or use another machine you have to "reload" your collections. You are asked to enter your email address - you have to provide this when you create a new collection - and a link is then sent to you. Load this link into your browser and you have your collections back.

Meetings and Workshops

Workshop: Untangling your web: effective web site management

Organiser: Manchester Business School

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: MBS, Manchester

Date: Wednesday, 14th September 2005

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

URL: <http://www.mbs.ac.uk/bis-training>

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

Organiser: TFPL

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: TFPL, London

Date: Thursday, 6th October 2005

Course fee: £295.00 + VAT.

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

Contact Information

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

UK Fax: 020 8020 0253
Int. Fax: +44 20 8020 0253

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.

If you wish to change your subscription from the PDF to the Plain Text version, send an email to tftr@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.

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

Copyright (c) 2005 Karen Blakeman. All rights reserved
