



Tales from the Terminal Room September 2006, Issue No. 73

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, and November and December, which are published as single issues. 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.

Tales from the Terminal Room can be delivered via email as plain text or as a PDF with active links. You can join the distribution list by going to <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/> and filling in the form. You will be sent an email asking you to confirm that you want to be added to the list. TFTTR is also available as an RSS feed. The URL for the feed is <http://www.rba.co.uk/rss/tftr.xml>

In this issue:

- Search Tools
 - MSN Search becomes Windows Live
- Market Research on the Web – Top 10 Tips
- Autumn conferences
 - Internet Librarian International
 - Investing in Europe: Focus on Asset, Ownership and Governance (London)
 - International Conference for Science & Business Information
- Information Resources
 - Google News goes back in time
 - Intute
 - Supplier Business
 - Blog – Petrolprices.cm
- Meetings and Workshops
 - Untangling Your Web: Effective Web Site Management, Manchester
 - Assessing the Quality of Information, London

Search Tools

MSN Search becomes Windows Live

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

There I was, standing in front of a workshop full of seriously proficient Internet searchers, and running through my list of Google alternatives. I get to MSN Search, hit the bookmark and stand there in bemused silence for what seemed like an eternity but was probably only about 10 seconds. In the couple of hours since I had checked the site, MSN Search had become Windows Live.

The screen may look very different but the search features and commands, some of them well hidden, are the same. The home page is the most obvious difference but the Search Builder, now renamed Advanced Search, has disappeared. It reappears once you display your results list. Why? I can only assume that Microsoft thinks that all searchers only resort to advanced search options when their initial basic search has failed. Not that it really matters, since some of the really good advanced options are not listed in the menu anyway and you have to use them by going into 'command line' mode. For example:

```
car ownership UK filetype:xls
```

The home page now has links for Web, Images, News and Local search but the free access to Encarta has been dropped. I have, though, seen various reports saying that you can still get to it by searching on encarta plus your search terms or site:encarta.msn.com plus the terms.

It would also be helpful to have the More option on the home page rather than having to generate a results page to see it. At present More gives you access to a Feeds search and Academic Live, both of which are still in beta. I first reviewed Academic Live in April 2006 (<http://www.rba.co.uk/rss/2006/04/windows-academic-search.html>). Not much seems to have changed in functionality but I note they have added many more journals to the database, including biomedical and healthcare titles. I subscribe to just about every official Microsoft alerting service but the enhancements do not seem to have made it to any of them. This is an ongoing problem with MSN Search/Windows Live; if you want to keep up with developments you have to regularly hunt around the site for changes and review the help files for the new and really useful commands*.

The Local search works pretty well, but I need to look at it in more detail and compare it with other similar services before I pass final judgement. One problem that struck me straight away was that although it started off with a UK map it transported me over to the US when I searched for churches in Caversham. I had to include UK in the location to force it back to the UK. The satellite images are slightly higher resolution and crisper than Google's for my location, and they seem to be more up to date.

Apart from Academic Live, I am not yet convinced that I should be using Live.com as my regular search engine. The web search results still seem to be more consumer and retail orientated than Google and Yahoo, and I am usually looking for research or statistics on a subject. A search on 'gin vodka sales uk' in Google and Yahoo will bring up market research reports and industry stats galore: on Live.com, the first is a statistical overview but the remainder on my first result page are online stores where one can buy gin and vodka! This is not actually a problem, and there are times when you may want to bias the search in this way, but it is as well to be aware of it.

Overall, a nice clean interface but very little has changed under the bonnet and some useful search features have disappeared from view.

*One useful command that you might have missed is the feed command. The scenario: you are, like me, a news and RSS feed junkie. You have found a really good news site covering your subject or industry sector but surely it cannot be true that they do not have RSS feeds? Check by

using the Live.com feed command combined with the site command. For example:

```
site:superduperwidget.co.uk feed:superduperwidget.co.uk
```

Try it on the BBC web site and you'll discover that they have 1,956 feeds!

Google RSS Reader revamped

<http://www.google.com/reader/>

Thank Heavens! Google has totally redesigned its RSS feed reader. The old interface was a disaster: hideous, confusing and non-intuitive. I suspect that many users who were new to RSS feeds have given up on the technology forever as a result.

Having got that whinge out of the way how does the new reader compare with what is already out there? For starters, the default display will now be familiar to existing RSS junkies like me. The left hand side of the screen lists your feeds, and in folders if you have decided to organise them in that way. The individual items are displayed in the central area of the screen, and there is a tips and tricks box on the right hand side of the "Home" page.

Google Reader now allows you to view just new items, all items in a single list, all items by folder or items by individual feed. For me, a variety of viewing options is essential. I need to view individual, priority feeds as soon as I fire up my reader in the morning but I am then quite happy to scan through all the UK news feeds, for example, as one long "folder" list. The only serious gripe I have with the display of the items and feeds is that Google Reader does not include the feeds own icons. It may seem a minor point but it is a quick way of identifying the feed source when scanning through a combined list of all your new items. One point to watch is that the default in Expanded View is to mark items read as you scroll through them. This is a feature that I find extremely irritating but is easily put right by going to Settings, Preferences.

The screenshot shows the Google Reader interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with navigation options: Home, All items (100+), Starred items, Shared items, Add subscription, and Browse. Below this is a list of subscriptions, including 'energy (100+)', 'Information services (100+)', and 'AlacraBlog (16)'. The main content area is titled 'Latest updates from iwr.co.uk' and shows two news items. The first item is 'SciFinder 2007 upgraded to combine answers in search' by Daniel Griffin, dated Friday 29 September 2006. The second item is 'CUP aims to double education division' by Katherine Rushton, dated Thursday 28 September 2006. Each item includes a star icon, share, email, and mark as read options, along with a list of tags.

There are two 'views' for items: Expanded View gives you the title, source and as much of the article that the publisher has decided to include in the item. The List View gives you the title, the first few words of the article and the date in just one line. To view the original or source document

just click on the title or the double chevron next to the title.

For each item you can Star, Share, Email, Mark as read and Edit tags. When I tried these out only the Email and Mark as read options worked: the others gave an "error has occurred message". But it is early days with the new interface so hopefully these glitches will be addressed. The email option defaulted to my Gmail account so there could be a problem if you want to send headlines or stories to colleagues and clients using your corporate email account. Other web based readers such as Newsgator use your default email reader. Also, you cannot send more than one headline or item per email - a failing with many web based RSS readers. Another notable omission is that you cannot keyword search your feeds or set up alerts, again a non-feature of most web based readers.

You can easily import and export your existing list of feeds and adding a subscription is straightforward. Google Reader, though, does not support user authentication so if you have Factiva feeds, for example, it is back to your PC based reader or Newsgator.com.

Overall, I am impressed. Until now I have been telling RSS newbies who want to just dip a toe in the RSS stream to avoid Google's reader like the plague. It is still not perfect, and I shall continue to use Omea on my laptop, but I have now added Google Reader to my list of recommended web based readers

Market Research on the Web - Top 10 Tips

Information professionals from the commercial sector, universities and government agencies attended the workshop [Market Research on the Web](#), held at Manchester Business School on September 6th. A regular feature of the courses that I run is the Top 10 tips, sites and tricks that I ask the participants to compile at the end of the day. This time, they came up with a very interesting mix of sites and search techniques.

1. Use search tools' **Advanced Search** screens and commands to help refine your search.

For example restrict your search to PDFs for large reports, XLS for spreadsheets containing data. Use the site: option to limit your search to types of organisations or an individual site, for example site:gov.uk for UK government sites or site:statistics.gov.uk to search just the UK national statistics web site.

Use the link commands to find pages that link to a document that you already have and which is highly relevant (pages that link to one another tend to have similar content). Use the Yahoo link command to find pages that link to a specific page (syntax - link:http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/stats.htm) or the linkdomain command to find pages that link to any page on a site (syntax - linkdomain:rba.co.uk)

2. Use the **Google define:** command to locate definitions of acronyms, abbreviations and jargon terms, for example define:cpm. Alternatively, in any search tool use the search 'what is....', for example what is cpm.
3. **Wikipedia** - www.wikipedia.org - for quick overviews on topics. [Note: this site was not covered in the course but several of the participants mentioned it as one of their starting points on subjects that are new to them]
4. **Alacrawiki** - www.alacrawiki.com - a guide to business information companies, publishers and databases. The Alacra Industry Spotlights in particular are extremely useful in providing reviews and commentary on industry specific web sites that have statistics, market research and news. Invaluable if you need to get up to speed on key resources in a sector or industry.

5. Make sure that you are using the **right keywords** and **jargon** related to the industry that you are researching. These can also vary from country to country, for example clothes washers versus washing machines. Also be aware that different directories use different coding systems and categorisations, and that there are different national official coding systems.
6. **Fita: Import Export Business & International Trade Leads** – www.fita.org. Good starting point for country and industry specific directories, market research sites, general information on trading in other countries and cultural differences in doing business.
7. **Bureau van Dijk Free Directory** – www.bvdep.com – click on the Free Directory link. This can be a useful way of identifying companies active in a sector in a country or region. You can also limit your search to size of company (for example large, medium, small, very small). Free Information includes name of the company, town, country and official registration number. Results can be exported in a variety of formats.
8. Use the **free executive summaries** and **tables of contents** provided by market research publishers for keywords and to identify major players in a market.
9. For smaller companies **export directories** often provide more free information than the official company registries. Information may include names of sales, marketing, export directors; key export markets and the products involved; turnover band; employees band. Search on the phrase export directory combined with a country and/or industry sector. Also try fita.org for directories or Marketingfile.com for searchable mailing lists including exporters/importers.
10. Try **social bookmarking services**, for example www.furl.net, to see what other people have identified as relevant in a particular area and to set up your own list of useful resources. The service is hosted on an external web site so you do not have to be at your own computer or at work to access your lists. Lists can be kept private, shared between colleagues or made completely public. [A participant on this course explained how her organisation uses FURL to share resources on topics between different groups and departments.]

Autumn Conferences

The autumn conference season is now in full swing and October is choc-a-bloc with information related events. Internet Librarian International kicks off on October 16th in London, quickly followed by a one day event on Investing in Eastern Europe. Then it's off to Nîmes for the International Conference for Science & Business Information.

Internet Librarian International

<http://www.internet-librarian.com/index.shtml>

This two day event, organised by Information Today is being held at the Copthorne Tara Hotel in London on October 16th -17th. The programme includes sessions on Blogs, Wikis and Collaboration Tools, E-Learning and Teaching, Digital Libraries and Resources, Web Research Skills and Resources, and Technology for Libraries. In addition there are four pre-conference masterclasses on Sunday October 15th on International Business Information Resources (Marydee Ojala); Conversation, Community, Connections and Collaboration: Practical, New Technologies for User-centred Services (Michael Stephens and Jenny Levine); Advanced Search Techniques for the Power Searcher and the Aspiring Power Searcher (Greg Notess); and Web Accessibility 2.0: A Holistic Approach (Brian Kelly).

Investing in Eastern Europe: Focus on Assets, Ownership and Governance

<http://www.rba.co.uk/fftr/archives/2006/sep2006.shtml>

<http://www.dataresources.co.uk/confintro.htm>

This is the 6th International conference on Commercial Information Gathering & Analysis and is organised by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Effective Technology Marketing. The venue is the Strand Palace Hotel, London and the date Thursday 19th October.

Programme

Chairman - Paul Byfield, Legal Information Specialist, EBRD

Keynote Address

The role of the Russian judicial system in protection of shareholders' rights in Russia
Olga Anisimova, Partner, Solicitor, Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe and former Russian Judge

Politics and the Bankruptcy of Russia's Richest Company: Analysis of the Yukos affair
Alan Rousso, Lead Counsellor, Office of the Chief Economist, EBRD

Corporate Governance in Action. The situation in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans
Gian Piero Cigna, Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, EBRD

Has eastern Europe benefited from privatisation?
speaker to be confirmed

Overview of the investment climate in The Caucasus
Anna Walker, Senior Editor & Economist for Eastern Europe, Economist Intelligence Unit.

The BIG THREE and others - commercial online east European business information services
Dr Frank Ryan, Manager, Business Information Centre, EBRD

Overview of free sources on the Internet relating to company ownership in central and eastern Europe
Karen Blakeman, Consultant, Rhodes–Blakeman Associates

International Conference for Science & Business Information

<http://www.infonortics.com/chemical/index.html>

Atria Novotel, Nîmes, France, October 22nd - 25th, 2006. Organised by Infonortics

Sessions include Trends, New Technologies, New Models, New Challenges; Applications in the Information Centre; Data Catalogues and Comparisons; The Information Centre; The Frontiers of Search; and Data Integration. I shall be giving a presentation on the first day entitled 'RSS, Blogs and Wikis: What Information Professionals Need to Know' and fellow UKeIG member Gary Horrocks is talking on 'Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar: What's the Difference?'.

Information Resources

Google News goes back in time

<http://news.google.com/archivesearch>

Google has added archives, some going back over 200 years, to Google News. You need to start off in archive search if you want to search articles older than 30 days as there is no link from the standard news search results list. The content is supplied by newspapers on the Web and news aggregators such as HighBeam, NewsBank and AlacraStore. Some of the articles are free but many are priced. If you only want to search for free articles there is a Price option in Advanced Search where you can select 'no price'.

The results are displayed in blocks of years for example 2003-2006, 1970s, before 1950 but they are not displayed in chronological order nor is there any date sort option. The timeline feature displays a timeline on the left hand side of the screen and selected articles for the time period. You have to keep narrowing down the time period by year and month to view all the articles in date order, and then repeat the process for each month. All very odd and very tedious. Why isn't there a straightforward sort by date?

This is a good attempt at pulling together historical news from a variety of sources but they really need to look at a better way of presenting results in date order. To be honest, I would not use Archive Search if I were looking for articles from the last 5 or 10 years about a company or a business search on some topic. Services such as Factiva and LexisNexis, both of which have pay as you go options, better search and display options, and many of the articles are cheaper.

Intute replaces RDN

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

A reminder that the Resource Discovery Network (RDN) has been replaced by Intute.

"Intute is a free online service providing you with access to the very best Web resources for education and research. The service is created by a network of UK universities and partners. Subject specialists select and evaluate the websites in our database and write high quality

descriptions of the resources."

I find the new service much easier to navigate and I can find relevant gateways more quickly than with the old RDN. There are 4 main areas: Science & Technology; Arts & Humanities; Social Sciences; and Health & Life Sciences. If you are interested in business information, the resources covered by the business and management section of SOSIG are now at <http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/business/>. Although their target audience is students, staff and researchers in higher and further education this collection of resources is of value to anyone who uses business information.

SupplierBusiness - research and analysis on the global automotive supplier community

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

SupplierBusiness is a business research company, focusing on automotive supply base issues. They publish a weekly newsletter, Insight, "for suppliers about suppliers" covering the global automotive supplier community, and a monthly newsletter called Analysis. SupplierBusiness analyses trends and developments in OEM purchasing, carries interviews with supplier and OEM industry executives, and reports on the latest M&A activity and financial news in the sector. As well as news and in depth reports there are databases of supplier profiles and who supplies whom. Subscription service.

Blog - PetrolPrices.com

<http://www.petrolprices.com/blog/>

My [blog posting](#) on [Petrolprices.com](http://www.petrolprices.com) is the entry that receives the largest number of hits by far. Not surprising as petrol prices continue to rise and there is a wide variation in pump prices even within a small area. The site now has a blog and recent articles include discussions on biodiesel and a special 4p/litre off promotion in Northern Ireland. RSS and Atom feeds are available so you can keep up to date with the topics via your favourite feed reader.

Meetings and Workshops

Workshop: Untangling Your Web: Effective Web Site Management

Organiser: Manchester Business School

Venue: Eddie Davies Library, Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, UK

Date: Wednesday, 11th October 2006

Course presenter: Karen Blakeman

Course fee: £250 + VAT or £215 + VAT for BIS/BINN members.

URL: <http://www.mbs.ac.uk/programmes/courses-seminars/management-research.htm>

Outline: Whether you already have a web site or are in the process of setting one up, keeping it in pristine condition and ensuring that your organisation benefits to the full can drive you to distraction. Once it is operational it is all too easy too easy to forget about it; but out of date pages and inaccurate information are bad news! This course looks at how to painlessly manage the process of keeping your web site up to date, how to identify key areas that can drive your business forward, and how to encourage visitors to come back for more.

Workshop: Assessing the Quality of Information
Organiser: TFPL
Venue: Times Square, 160 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4BF
Date: Tuesday, 31st October 2006
Course presenter: Karen Blakeman
Course fee: £295 +VAT (total £346.63)
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

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