



Tales from the Terminal Room April 2007, Issue No. 78

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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.

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/tfttr/> 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/tfttr.xml>

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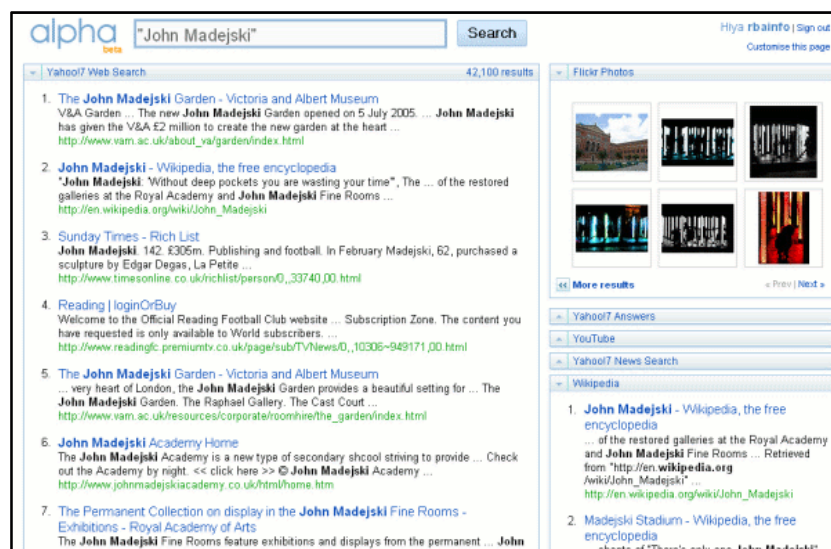
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Search Tools

Yahoo! Alpha

<http://au.alpha.yahoo.com/>

[Amit Agarwal](http://labnol.blogspot.com/2007/04/yahoo-alpha-google-custom-search-engine.html) (<http://labnol.blogspot.com/2007/04/yahoo-alpha-google-custom-search-engine.html>) has reported on a new version of Yahoo! called Yahoo! Alpha at <http://au.alpha.yahoo.com>. It has a minimalist home page, which has become de rigueur for search engines these days, and a single search box. The results page displays the usual list of web pages and on the right hand side you can opt to view results from Flickr, Yahoo Answers, YouTube, Yahoo News, Wikipedia and Sponsored links.



In the top right hand corner there is an option to Customise this page that enables you to remove one or more of the resources and to add your own.

I was initially intrigued by Yahoo Alpha but found it rather slow to respond and not as slick or responsive as Askx.com, which is testing out a similar approach to searching. Missing from both Askx and Yahoo Alpha is an obvious Advanced Search link. Both are in Beta and worth watching to see how they develop.

Live.com takes link commands offline

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

Those of you who use the link commands in Live.com will have noticed that over the past week link: and linkdomain: have been returning blank results pages. This is not a temporary glitch but has been done on purpose by Live. According to their [blog](#):

“We have been seeing broad use of these features by legitimate users but unfortunately also what appears to be mass automated usage for data mining. So for now, we have made the tough call to block all queries with these operators. We are doing our best to get this back online as soon as possible in a manner that allows folks that use this functionality for real queries.”

The linkfromdomain: command, which lists all the pages that a web site links to, is still working.

While Live makes up its mind about what to do with the commands try link and linkdomain in Yahoo. The results are not always as comprehensive as Live.com’s but will probably suffice in most situations. The syntax for the Yahoo’s link command is slightly different. To find pages that

link to a specific page on a site it is:

```
link:http://www.yoursite.com/pagename.html
```

Note that you must include the 'http://'

To find pages that link to any page on a site the syntax is similar to Live's:

```
linkdomain:yoursite.com
```

Google also has a link command but it displays a small fraction of the results.

Top Search Tips from Switzerland

Yes, it's yet another Top 10 Search Tip - this time from a group of researchers from International organisations based in Switzerland. The event was hosted by [CERN](#) in Geneva, well known for its particle accelerator but also the birth place of the World Wide Web. Topping the list was Crossengine at <http://www.crossengine.com/>. The rest of the Top 10 are on my blog at <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2007/03/27/top-10-search-tips-from-switzerland/>

UKeiG Annual Seminar

Riding the waves or treading water: confronting the challenges of a volatile electronic environment

<http://www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2007/june/ridingthewaves.html>

UKeiG announces its Annual Seminar to be held on 13th June in the Brunei Gallery at SOAS, London. The UKeiG Annual Seminar brings together a group of experts to share with us some of their thoughts on key issues for the information professional. This year the topic focuses on the constantly-changing technologies and offers insight on how to keep professionally aware in this challenging environment. Non-members as well as members of UKeiG are welcome. There will also be a short AGM for members only at 13.50 pm.

The aim of the day will be to highlight and discuss key pressure points on e-information professionals at a time when rapidly changing technologies are forcing us to make tough decisions on service prioritisation. Every day we face new innovations in IT and information retrieval, and it is increasingly difficult to see the wood for the trees. What resources will have the most relevance and impact on business processes and stakeholders in your workplace; which others are hype?

A new generation of internet savvy professionals and information consumers are coming to the workplace with a very different skills set and interpretation of the digital landscape. How do we develop our training, support and resource delivery tools to accommodate this new generation? Similarly, what CPD strategies and directions for personal development should we consider to ensure that we retain our visibility and relevance in increasingly complex knowledge organisations?

Speakers include:

Peter Godwin. Academic Liaison Librarian at the University of Bedfordshire. Peter is a member of SCONUL Advisory Committee and Working Group for Information Literacy since 2001. He has a particular interest in academic staff and information literacy, levels of information literacy, and now how Web 2.0 is affecting the content and delivery of information literacy.

Sue Hill. Managing Director of Sue Hill Recruitment. Sue Hill Recruitment is a specialist employment agency to the UK library and information sector. Sue formed the company in 1998 and is based in London. It also has offices in the Midlands and has recruitment links in Australia and New Zealand.

Jan-Martin Lowendahl. Research Director, [Gartner Research](#). Gartner Research provides IT related services and research. Peter's research area is higher-education technology strategies including administrative and academic systems, learning technologies, identity and access management, as well as European higher education issues.

Val Skelton. Head of Training and Learning at TFPL Ltd. TFPL Ltd is a professional services company focusing on knowledge, information, library, records and web & content management. Val focuses on identifying and developing the skills and competencies required to support effective information and knowledge strategies.

Further details and a booking form are on the UKeig web site at <http://www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2007/june/ridingthewaves.html>

Information Resources

ZoomInfo fails to address quality issues

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

[ZoomInfo](#) has updated its business and people search engine. For those unfamiliar with the service, ZoomInfo searches and provides information on 35 million 'people' and 3.4 million companies. Unlike most conventional company and people directories, though, the information is gathered and compiled automatically by what it calls a semantic search engine. Content can be edited and corrected by the subject themselves, but you have to pay for at least a trial subscription in order to do it. ZoomInfo is free for basic information and advertiser supported. For full access you can upgrade to a ZoomExec account for USD 99 a month, and the full PowerSearch option costs from USD 3,950/year.

I have been attempting to carry out a proper evaluation for some time on behalf of various clients, and the redesigned site encouraged me to pay for a week's trial at USD 19.99 for the ZoomExec service. I should make it clear right now, that I started this evaluation with a totally negative opinion of the service. My previous experiences of ZoomInfo in terms of quality have not been good and I regret to have to say that the upgrade has not changed my opinion.

The home page features three tabs - company searches, people searches and job searches via content from [Indeed](#) (<http://www.indeed.com/>). There is also a tag cloud representing popular keywords used for searches on ZoomInfo. Company search and people searches by name are ad-supported: searches by keywords, job titles and other criteria are part of the priced services. One always starts an evaluation such as this using standard test searches on something or someone you know. Inevitably, then, I first did a search on myself. It found 22 people, or rather profiles. These profiles are compiled from web pages found by ZoomInfo and grouped together. Some of the profiles refer to the same person (there were four for me when I looked) but it is amazing how wrong ZoomInfo can be and that it can miss so much relevant and correct information that is out on the web.

None of my four profiles had my correct company name and the information in all cases was garbled. The most comprehensively supported profile, which was compiled from 36 web sites, has me working for TFPL. Yes, I am one of their associate trainers hired by them on a consultancy basis but I am not 'employed' by TFPL. One could argue that it is an easy enough mistake for a poor dumb computer to make, especially as I am mentioned several times on the TFPL web site. But ZoomInfo has gone further and given me a non-existent email address at TFPL plus a Glasgow telephone number. I live and work in Reading a long way from Glasgow but, even if I did

work at TFPL, their main office is in London. To be fair if you are prepared to drill down through the web site references you do eventually arrive at the correct information on my own web site, but then why bother with ZoomInfo? Any half decent searcher could get there far more quickly using standard search engines and find more up to date information

The screenshot shows a ZoomInfo profile for Karen Blakeman. At the top, there are search filters for 'Company Search', 'People Search', and 'Job Search'. The profile name is 'Karen Blakeman' and the company is 'TFPL Ltd'. The profile includes a 'Profile Statistics' section with 'Times Viewed: 3', 'Times Forwarded: 0', 'Web References: 36', and 'Quick Lists: 0'. Below this is a 'Karen's Zoom Network' section listing contacts like Paul Pedley, Sylvia James, Stella Clarke, Ian Thomson, Jeff Morelli, and Chris West. The 'Employment History' section shows 'Information Consultant' at 'TFPL Ltd' with a detailed description of the company's history. The 'Web References' section lists '1. trainers and speakers' with a link to a training course.

If you have an account, you can set up your own public profile and consolidate existing profiles and correct them. Companies can do the same. That does not mean that the information will be any more accurate. ZoomInfo clearly states that it does not verify such information.

For company profiles, you are supposed to be able to view a list of competitors. Not a single one of my competitors were listed. Instead I was presented with a list consisting mostly of search tools: Lycos, Infoseek, Northern Light, EEVL, News Now and so on.

I tried searches on some of my colleagues and the results were even more difficult to fathom. The Advanced Search where you can also include a company as well as a person's name ignored the company name in all cases. (I may have been clicking the wrong buttons or this feature may only work for PowerSearch accounts). Since I and most of my associates are running small businesses - probably not ZoomInfo's forte - I persuaded some of my large, International, corporate clients to try it out on people, companies and industries that they know. Their reactions ranged from laughter at the start, through disbelief at how wrong and out of date the data was, and finally to irritation and annoyance.

I did look at some of the other services on offer, such as keyword searching for products and services and Job searches, but I still could not find any redeeming features that would persuade me to pay money for this service or to even use the free search. There are other sources and directories out there that are more reliable and up to date, and some of them free.

Kidon Media Link

<http://www.kidon.com/media-link/>

I was alerted to this listing by David Dunkley at the WTO. Kidon Media-Link lists 18,437 newspapers and other news sources from around the world. Newspaper, magazine, television, radio, and news agency sources are listed by country. You can also browse by language or search by media type, title and city. The results include a link to the source, a two letter code indicating the type of resource (news agency, radio, newspaper etc.), the frequency of publication, and the languages in which it is published or broadcast. This is a useful alternative to [ABYZ News Links](http://www.abyznewslinks.com/) (<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/>), which provides similar listings.

The Association for Qualitative Research

<http://www.aqr.org.uk/>

Founded in the early 1980s, the [Association for Qualitative Research](#) has over a thousand members. The web site includes a directory of qualitative research practitioners and suppliers of services. The Directory is available as a handbook published as an A5 format of 500 pages and is free to anyone on request (subject to availability). The published version of the directory includes a selection of articles, reference documents, and the AQR membership list.

There is also a section on useful contacts that lists professional associations, membership organisations and industry bodies focussing on particular aspects of research or services, both in the UK and overseas. The categories include market research, advertising organisations, marketing/direct mail and overseas associations. In addition, the site has a library of articles which are free to read, some short, some in-depth, and a glossary of terms used in market and qualitative research.

Overall, a very good starting point for market and qualitative research in terms of understanding the industry, terminology, identifying relevant organisations, and tracking down practitioners in the field.

The Viewing Facilities Association UK

<http://www.viewing.org.uk/>

The UK Viewing Facilities Association is a trade association representing companies which have viewing studios and services available for hire to other market researchers, (as opposed to studios which are tied to particular research companies). It sets high standards for membership such as requiring members to meet certain levels of customer satisfaction, to be members of the MRS and work to the MRS code of conduct. They must also have completed fire risk and health and safety assessments. The site contains a directory of members and is searchable by location.

Searching Questions

Question:

I and my colleagues work for an international organisation and come from a range of countries: Sweden, Switzerland, France, UK, US etc. We sometimes swap desks and the problem is that we each have our preferred country version of Google set as the default search engine. We have noticed that even when we are searching in English and searching the whole of the web rather than "country pages" we often get different results depending on which country version of Google we are using. Does Google really have different databases for different countries. I have heard that is the case for China but does that apply elsewhere?

Answer:

Google has lots of different databases for everywhere on hundreds of servers! Even if you are searching Google UK in English, your search may be directed to any one of several servers and each may have a database that is slightly different from the other. It is noticeable though that different country versions do vary in the results that they present, and if you choose the local language for the interface the results can change dramatically.

Meetings and Workshops

Workshop: Improving your Internet communications: Blogs, RSS and Wikis

Organiser: Manchester Business School

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

Date: Wednesday, 20th June 2007

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Course fee: BIS/BINN members £215 + VAT; others £250 + VAT

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

Outline: Without realising it, many of us are already using blogs, wikis and RSS – all Web 2.0 technologies. This workshop will cut through the jargon and hype and suggest ways in which you can use them as information sources, tools of collaboration or as part of your information delivery strategy. It will look at how they can be used to manage projects, provide users with current awareness, generate newsletters, and promote your expertise to colleagues, users and clients. There is a substantial practical element to the workshop giving you a chance to try out the technologies, assess their relevance, and consider how you can implement them within your organisation. The impact of the new technologies on information integrity and quality will also be addressed.

Seminar: UKeiG Annual Seminar. Riding the waves or treading water: confronting the challenges of a volatile electronic environment

Organiser: UKeiG

Venue: Bloomsbury Suite, Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London

Date: Wednesday, 13 June 2007 9.15-16.30

Presenters: Jan-Martin Lowendahl (Gartner), Peter Godwin (University of Bedfordshire), Sue Hill (Sue Hill Recruitment), Val Skelton (TFPL).

Course fee: £80 + VAT (£94.00); others £100 + VAT (£117.50)

URL: <http://www.ukeig.org.uk/training/2007/june/ridingthewaves.html>

Outline: The aim of the day will be to highlight and discuss key pressure points on e-information professionals at a time when rapidly changing technologies are forcing us to make tough decisions on service prioritisation. Every day we face new innovations in IT and information retrieval, and it is increasingly difficult to see the wood for the trees. What resources will have the most relevance and impact on business processes and stakeholders in your workplace; which others are hype?

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