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Tales from the Terminal Room (TFTTR) is an electronic newsletter that includes reviews and comparisons of information sources; useful tools for managing information; technical and access problems on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications. Many of the items and articles will have already appeared on Karen Blakeman's Blog at http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/

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
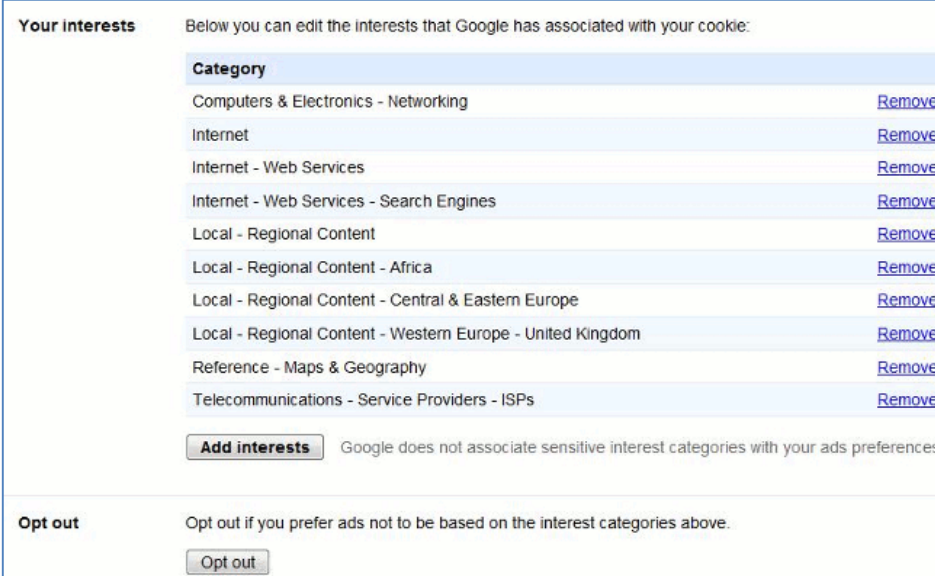
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What Google thinks you are interested in

You may find advertisements on search results pages irritating but the search engines go to a lot of trouble to ensure that the ads you are exposed to match the content of your search and the sites that you select. Google stores this information in your ad preferences and allows you to view and edit them. You think you don't have any just because you don't click on ad? Then check out http://www.google.com/ads/preferences/.

It does not matter whether or not you are logged in to your Google account because the information is stored in cookies associated with your browser. If you use more than one browser, each will have their own set of preferences that have to be viewed from within the browser. This has implications if you conduct confidential research and others have access to your computer. You might be deleting your search history but it is still possible to get a general idea of what areas you are working on. Your ad preferences also affect advertisements that Google shows on other websites for which it provides advertisements, for example YouTube, news sites and blogs.
You can remove or add an interest category, or opt out altogether from Google's targeted advertising. My Firefox ad preferences mostly reflect the type of research I carry out, although I was puzzled by the inclusion of Local-Regional Content – Africa.

To opt out of behavioural or targeted advertising run by other services the Network Advertising Initiative at http://www.networkadvertising.org/ lists about 50 members and allows you to opt-out of all or a selection. The list will also inform you whether or not you currently have an active cookie from that service. When I looked at my listing there were about fifteen I had never heard of and amazed that I had active cookies on nearly all of them. This is big business!

NAI member companies set a minimum lifespan of five years for their opt out cookies but if your browser is set to automatically clear cookies after a certain time period you will have to go through the opt-out procedure again. Note that opting-out does not mean that adverts will no longer be displayed, it just means that they will not match what Google and other services believe are your interests.

Opt-Out Status

Select all | Clear | Submit

| Member Company	Status	Opt-Out
aCerno More Information	**No Cookie** You have not opted out and you have no cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
AdBrite More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
Adconion More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
Adify Media More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
Advertising.com More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
Aggregate Knowledge More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
Akamai More Information	**Active Cookie** You have not opted out and you have an active cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐
AlmondNet More Information	**No Cookie** You have not opted out and you have no cookie from this network.	Opt-Out ☐

Google Images rolls out Bing-like results

Google has rolled out Bing style results for its image search. If you have never used Bing Image search take a look now. Several people in my latest search workshop loved it so much that they included it in their top search tips (http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2010/07/16/top-search-tips-14th-july-2010-workshop/). Bing Images results do not do page by page results: Bing Images does continuous scroll. As you move down through the results more images are loaded, and more, and more. There is no click "next page" to distract you. And now Google has copied the style… sort of. I have several problems with Google's new image results layout. The first thing that struck me was that the images are all crammed in side by side to neatly fill the rows. Have the images been cropped to obtain the desired effect or have they been selected by dimensions, rather than relevance, to fill the 'mosaic'? Bing has four images in each row regardless of their relative dimensions so there is more white space between the images, which is easier on the eye. Google's display makes me feel as though I'm in a jam-packed standard class commuter train carriage: Bing is the more spacious, relaxed first class.

Neither Google nor Bing display by default image information, but you only need to hover over the image in which you are interested to see further details. The information is almost the same in both but Bing has an additional option to look for more sizes. The size option is great if you want to use an image but do not want to have the trouble of re-scaling it for your particular application. But not all images are available in 'more sizes'. It depends on whether or not other web pages have reproduced the image with different dimensions. If you own a particular image with strict copyright protection and you know you have only posted a specific size on one page, this can be a useful tool in tracking down copyright violations.

When it comes to scrolling down through your results, Google seems to have lost the plot. Work your way down through the results on Bing and the display smoothly unfolds. Google's is stop start stop…….start, stop. And it is so slooooooooow. I can almost hear the cog wheels clanking. Another distraction in Google is that batches of images are separated by the text 'page 2′, 'page 3′, 'page 4′ etc. Why? The whole point of continuous scrolling of results is that there are no pages of results. Bing is so much faster, smoother and slicker.

When it comes to clicking through on an image Google almost wins. Google gives you a background of the web page and superimposed upon that is the full size image. To the right is information about the image with the warning "This image may be subject to copyright".
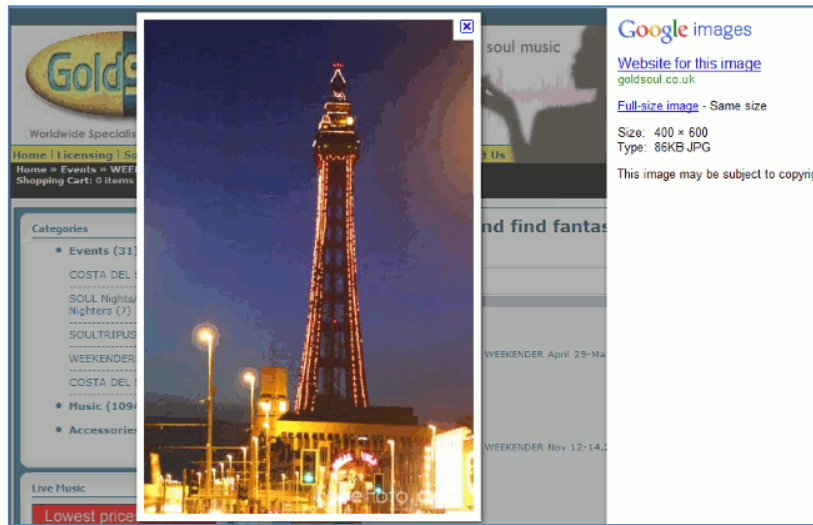
Bing's does not have the same initial impact, but it does display a scrollable list of thumbnails of your search results to the left of the screen. This is very useful if the image you have selected turns out not to be exactly what you need and you want to review the alternatives.

Who wins? For me it is Bing. It is much faster, easier on the eye, has equally relevant results and has an extra 'more sizes' option. And finally… it just feels right.

London Workshop: Advanced Google Searching

I am running a series of hands-on workshops this autumn in London, and the first is on Advanced Google Searching. It is being held on September 23rd at Just IT, 7 Sandy's Row, which is near Liverpool Street.

Google is the first port of call for many of us when it comes to searching the Internet, and with more data and services being added all the time it seems the obvious place to start. More information, more search features but not necessarily more relevant results. This hands-on workshop will look at the latest developments in Google (for example Google property search, statistics and public data explorer) and how to focus your search to obtain better results.

Topics covered include:

- recent developments and new services from Google
- how Google personalises your results
- how Google is incorporating social media
- essential advanced search commands
- how to use the new options to narrow down your search for more relevant results
- how to access and use the specialist tools
- image, video and news search
- build your own Google Custom Search Engine

This workshop is suitable for all levels of experience. The techniques and approaches covered can be applied to all subject areas. A booking form is available at
http://www.rba.co.uk/training/AdvancedGoogle.htm

Top search tips – 14th July 2010 workshop

An interesting mix of sectors were represented at my recent UKeiG workshop "The Changing Landscape of search". With social media becoming such an important part of search, there was a lot to cover in just one day and still include time for delegates to try out search tools for themselves. At the end of these workshops I ask the group to come up with their own top 10 tips. On this occasion we ended up with 13 and then a few people emailed me some more, thereby doubling the number to 20! The list is a combination of simple tried and tested techniques, new services and tools, and new strategies for dealing with the vast amount of information that is returned by the search engines.

1. Set up your own **Google custom search engine** (http://www.google.com/cse/) for groups of sites that you regularly search and use. It is quick and easy to do, and you can keep them private or make them public.

2. **Docjax** (http://www.docjax.com/) for searching Google and Yahoo for file formats ppt, doc, xls, pdf

3. Use **Twitter** (http://www.twitter.com/) to keep up with what people are saying about your organisation or industry, and to find out what is happening at conferences.

4. **Nearby Tweets** (http://nearbytweets.com/) for monitoring tweets on a subject and from a geographical location

5. **Save tweets and Twitter searche**s if you are using Twitter for competitive intelligence or reputation monitoring/management.

6. Try out the Google **Wonderwheel** to see connections between concepts and to change the direction of your search. Run your search, open up the options in the menu to the left of your search and click on Wonderwheel. This had mixed reviews from the workshop participants and even its fans said that it does not always help with the search.

Nevertheless, worth trying if you are stuck in a rut and fed up with seeing the same results again and again.

7. In **Google use the menu options** to the left of your search results to help you focus your search and for more relevant results.

8. **Separate real time and "traditional" web search**. Google, Bing and Yahoo incorporate real time and social media results into the main search results. These results are not comprehensive and give a superficial, biased view of the topic. Use the specialised real time search tools for searching social media.

9. **Slidefinder** (http://www.slidefinder.net/) for locating individual presentation slides that contain your search terms. There is an Advanced Search that enables you to search specific areas of a slide, for example title, text, notes. You can also limit your search to a university. There are browsable lists at the bottom of the page but they do not list every institution: there are only 47 for the UK!

10. View the **cached page** version of a document in your search results to see where and how often your terms occur. Useful for very large documents.

11. **Biznar** (http://www.biznar.com/). Real time federated search tool covering selected business sites, some of which are not searched by Google et al.

12. **Google Timeline** to see the distribution of pages and documents over time. Remember, though, that the dates are not always when the content was published. A date or year might just have been mentioned in the text or Google mistakenly interpreted a number as a date.

13. Use **double quotes** "" around phrases to find specific names or titles. This one is a golden oldie but one that is often forgotten. Works in nearly every search tool.

14. **Try alternative names or change a single term** to expand your search results, for example BP oil spill vs. BP oil leak. See what the search engine suggests as you type in your strategy and in Google look at the Related Searches option in the menu to the left of your search results.

15. **Add the year to your strategy** when searching for somebody or something from a particular year. A simple, obvious trick but another one that is often forgotten. This will only look for the number in the text and does not run a date search, but it does significantly narrow down your search.

16. **Try using non-UK and non-US versions of Google**, for example http://www.google.com.ar/ or http://www.google.es/ if the information is likely to be in Spanish.

17. **When using Google, click on 'similar'** to find related information and sites similar in content and type.

18. **Bing for images**. No need to keep clicking the next page for more images, just keep scrolling down. Some also commented that the quality of the results and the layout are better than Google.

19. For **video archives** try BBC Motion Gallery – BBC Archive at http://www.bbcmotiongallery.com/gallery/home/archives.do and NewsFilm Online at http://www.nfo.ac.uk/

20. **Social Mention** (http://www.socialmention.com/). Great for monitoring mentions in the social media about a person, company or topic.

The slides for the day can be found on Slideshare at http://www.slideshare.net/KarenBlakeman/changing-landscape-of-search

Business Links to go

Real Business reports that Business Link is yet another UK government service due for the chop. In an exclusive interview Mark Prisk, the business and enterprise minister, told Real Business "We're going to wind down the Regional Development Agencies, and as part of those, we'll be winding down the regional Business Link contracts." (Business Link to be axed http://realbusiness.co.uk/leadership/exclusive_business_link_to_be_axed).

Mark Prisk went on to say "The regional Business Links have spent too much time signposting and not enough time actually advising." and that he envisages a "21st Century service" co-funded by the private sector and delivered online. The interview has been picked up by numerous blogs and the regional press, and comments have been both negative and positive. Some people have nothing but praise for their local Business Link whilst others report that the advice they received was useless and a waste of time. This reflects the mixed feedback I get from people who attend my business information workshops: the quality of the service varies widely depending on which Business Link you use and who you speak to.

Also worth reading is Real Business's analysis of Business Link at "Business Link: never fit for purpose" at http://realbusiness.co.uk/leadership/business_link_never_fit_for_purpose.
So what is going to replace Business Link if anything? Mark Prisk is reported as saying that he envisages private-sector business support agencies, such as those linked to their local Chamber of Commerce, taking on a bigger role in providing face-to-face advice and networking. In addition the "21st century" approach will include an improved and easier to use desktop and mobile online service and a call centre that will provide "that little bit of extra advice".

Oh joy! We can now look forward to being held in a call centre queue for half the day before we reach a "consultant" who then works through the mandatory script. Some questions are easy enough to pre-package and include in an FAQ, for example where to find information on a company or the latest changes in VAT regulations. But, to be honest, if you do not already know the answer to either of those the chances of your business surviving are slim. Would the call centre be able to handle more complex enquiries, though? How about explaining why information on a particular company is NOT available at Companies House and should you be worried that it isn't, or where to find a list of the 100 best selling books on mind, body and spirit for the years 2005-2009?

I must admit that I have never used Business Links myself. They were not around when I started my business in 1989 and as I have worked in the information industry for over 25 years I know where to find the main sources of reliable business information. More importantly, personal and professional networks play a significant part in my intelligence and news gathering activities as they probably do for many other business people; and the use of social media is increasing. I wonder, then, how much impact if any the demise of the Business Links will have on SMEs and UK business in general.

Business Information Resources

Top Business Search Tips

At the end of July I was in mid Wales running a workshop on business information. There was a good mix of experience and backgrounds amongst the participants and plenty of time for people to try out 'stuff' and share tips with each other. At the end of the day they came up with a list of their top 10 business search tips. Actually it was 11 – the additional one was my own web site, which I used as a starting point for many of the examples. You could say they were virtually brainwashed into including it so I am giving them that one as a 'free' extra! Here is the full list.

1. **Marketingfile** http://www.marketingfile.com/ Collection of business to business and consumer mailing lists. Free to search and reasonably priced pay as you go purchase options. Buy as many or as few records as you need or as dictated by your budget.

2. **Directionlessgov** http://www.directionlessgov.com/ Having problems finding information on UK government web sites or on DirectGov? Then get thee hence to this Google custom search engine from the people behind They Work for You (http://www.theyworkforyou.com/), What do they know – make and browse Freedom of Information Requests (http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/) and FixMyStreet (http://www.fixmystreet.com/)

   "We got so fed up with the general uselessness of the multi-million pound shambles otherwise known as the Direct.gov.uk portal, that we decided to build something better in under an hour. Sadly, we ran catastrophically behind schedule, but we still finished before lunch."

   Google results are shown on the right hand side of your results screen and you can compare them with the DirectGov results on the left hand side of the screen. There seems to be intermittent problems at the moment when clicking on the Directionlessgov search results; you are sometimes taken to the Directionlessgov home page instead of the page in the results. Nevertheless, still worth using as the results are far superior and you do at least have the details of the web site and document.

3. **Companies House** http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/ The official companies register for the UK. There is a free company and disqualified directors search available under the Webcheck Service. At the time of writing the link was in the middle of the right hand part of the home page. You can search the database for free and free company information includes name, registered company number, registered address, status, date of incorporation, nature of business, date of accounts, previous names. Documents can be purchased on a pay per view basis.

4. **Kompass** http://www.kompass.com/ Worldwide directory of products. Search by keywords, company, products, classification codes. Basic search is free of charge. In order to use the advanced search and view full company profiles you will have to purchase a subscription or 'credit units'. The minimum number of 50 credit units costs EUR120 or USD 170

5. **StatsWales** http://statswales.wales.gov.uk/ Forget about the ONS – if you need data and statistics on Wales this is the place to go. *"StatsWales is a free-to-use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables from the most detailed official data on Wales."* Email alerts and RSS feeds are available.

6. **Business support, information and advice | Flexible Support for Business Wales** http://fs4b.wales.gov.uk/ Everything you need to know about setting up and running a business in Wales.

7. **D&B UK small business centre** for business reports and company financial performance tracking http://www.do-business.net/sbc/. Provides reports on over 3.3 million UK companies. Report content varies depending on whether you need a customer, competitor, supplier or a partner report. Prices start at GBP 7.50 and there are sample reports to give you an idea of what each includes. The supplier report, for example, gives star ratings for overall condition of the business and how it compares with other business in the same industry sector, size of the business, names of the directors, significant legal proceedings/events such as County Court Judgements.

8. **FITA** http://www.fita.org/ Founded in 1984, FITA *"fosters international trade by strengthening the role of local, regional, and national associations throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada"*. In addition to services for members, there is a very useful collection of Web resources for International trade. There are over 8000 annotated links. Categories include country or region, legal resources, doing business in another country, International market research and business directories. The business directories are subdivided into industry specific, global and country directories. The links are in the menu on the left hand side of the screen.

9. **UK Trade and Investment** http://www.ukti.gov.uk/ *"UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) works*

with UK-based businesses to ensure their success in international markets, and encourage the best overseas companies to look to the UK as their global partner of choice." There is information on industry sectors and business opportunities in other countries as well as help for new and experienced exporters.

10. 10 **LinkedIn** http://www.linkedin.com/ Useful professional networking site for biographical information on people (if they are members) and for identifying contacts within companies.

11. And the eleventh is **Business Information on the Internet** (Compiled by Karen Blakeman) http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/, business resources organised by type e.g. statistics, market research, company registers.

Meetings and Seminars

Workshop: How to stay ahead of the game with Web 2.0
Date: Tuesday, 7 September, 2010 09:30 - 16:30
Venue: The Learning Centre, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham
Organiser: UKeiG
Presenter: Karen Blakeman
Outline: The term Web 2.0 covers a multitude of sins - and many virtues! The terminology and jargon sometimes inhibits the take up of tools that can significantly improve the effectiveness of your services and the way you work. These tools enable you to share presentations to promote your own and your department's skills and expertise; use RSS to keep you and your users up to date or to publish/republish information; create brief "how to" videos and tours of your library; tap into social and professional networks for research. The workshop takes a down to earth view of how applications can be used in the workplace and participants will have ample opportunity to try out services for themselves.
Cost: UKeiG members £180.00 (£211.50 including VAT); others £220.00 (£258.50 including VAT)
URL: http://www.ukeig.org.uk/trainingevent/how-stay-ahead-game-web-20

Workshop: Advanced Google Searching
Date: Thursday, 23rd September 2010 09:30 - 16:30
Venue: Just IT, 7 Sandy's Row, London E1 7HW
Organiser: RBA Information Services
Presenter: Karen Blakeman
Outline: Google is the first port of call for many of us when it comes to searching the Internet, and with more data and services being added all the time it seems the obvious place to start. More information, more search features but not necessarily more relevant results. This hands-on workshop will look at the latest developments in Google and how to focus your search to obtain better results. You will have ample opportunity to experiment and try out the techniques for yourself and Karen will be on hand to help and advise you. Exercises are provided to help you test out the search features but you are free to try out searches of your own.
Cost: £140 + VAT (£164.50)
URL: http://www.rba.co.uk/training/AdvancedGoogle.htm

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