

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 problems on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications.

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Blinkx - local and web searching combined

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

A new free search tool called Blinkx has been launched. Blinkx claims to eliminate the need for keywords or complex search methods and locates information, whether it be on the web, in the news, or within files on your PC. It uses self-learning algorithms to understand the context of what you are reading on your computer screen. The publicity sounds great and if it works it will be a fantastic way of combining information stored in documents on your PC with Internet resources such as news, web pages, videos etc.

To use Blinkx you first have to download the program to your PC (there is no Mac version at present). It requires Microsoft Windows XP or Windows 2000 and there are two versions: one is the standard Internet Explorer version and there is a beta version for those of us who use Mozilla. The product is still being tested and there are frequent revisions, so the features you find in the program can vary from day to day depending on which version you have downloaded.

When you first run Blinkx, you should tell it which directories on your machine you want it to index and also run the Fast Indexing option. The indexing can take anywhere between a few minutes to a few hours depending on the number of files on your system. Then you are ready to go.

I had problems with my very first search. It indexes .doc, ppt, Excel and PDF files but **not** rtf, txt or html files - or so I thought. Running a search by opening up its own search window limited me to PDF, ppt, doc and xls. If, however, I used the Blinkx toolbar that appears at the top of the browser and Office programs it **did** pick up some txt files. Another inconsistency is that when searching via its own search window, the "All documents" gives me zero results but clicking on the icons for the individual file types, for example PDF, did find relevant documents. Furthermore, it only supports Outlook, Outlook Express and Eudora email files, so it is pretty useless if you are using alternative email clients.

As for the Internet searches there is no information about which web database it is

using. The News option uses the Moreover database and the blog option... well I don't know what it uses because I never had any results at all from that.

You can highlight terms in web pages and Office documents and use the Blinkx toolbar to find other relevant documents or web pages but according to the PR blurb, it is supposed to do this automatically. I couldn't see any of this going on but perhaps I wasn't looking in the right place. Or maybe I have misunderstood this part of the program?

A rather neat feature is the visual representation option that shows the relationships between the results. This will look very familiar to those of you who have seen Anacubis or Kartoo in action.

I had Blinkx running for 4 days. At the start, the local documents it found for me were relevant but the web results were useless. The company does emphasise that this is a "concept" as opposed to a "keyword" search tool, but there is no explanation as to how the concepts are identified and analysed. I assumed that Blinkx needed to learn more about what I regarded as relevant but as the days passed the Internet results were no better and my local hard disk results became increasingly bizarre.

Overall I was not impressed, but it could have just been me or perhaps I had downloaded a duff build of the program. I have now removed it from my machine. One to watch nonetheless.

Emerald to launch Emerald Management Xtra

The Emerald Group is to launch Emerald Management Xtra for business school and university teachers, students, authors, researchers and librarians. Emerald Management Xtra is a comprehensive collection of peer-reviewed management journals and online support and will go live in December 2005. Beta test versions are available now.

Emerald Management Xtra includes access to unpublished research, conference updates and listings, case studies, literature reviews, interviews and book reviews. The service offers an integrated search and navigation for

Emerald Fulltext and Emerald Management Reviews in addition to the extra resources in Emerald Management Xtra.

Emerald Management Xtra will feature access to primary journal content from Emerald journals at a substantial discount compared with purchasing access to journals and abstracts separately.

There is an online demo and additional information at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/emx>.

IAB launches All About Cookies

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) has launched a guide on the use of cookies and other tracking technology. The use of cookies affects the day-to-day operation of most web sites and online advertising and marketers need to be aware of the privacy and security issues that the new EU legislation raises.

The guide, which can be found at <http://www.allaboutcookies.org/>, is a free online resource for web site owners, marketers and consumers. Web site owners can download a cookie policy template and link to the new site from their Terms and Conditions. There is also up-to-date information about cookies, how they are used and how users can manage their interaction with cookies.

A similar resource has been available from the law firm Masons for over a year at <http://www.aboutcookies.org/>

More information on the IAB initiative can be found at <http://www.iabuk.net/index.php?class=news&view=726>

Information Resources

Directories

Digital Library of Historical Directories

<http://www.historicaldirectories.org/>

If have any serious work that needs doing, do **not** look at this site! You may, like me, get hooked and two or three hours can pass by very quickly once you are into this fascinating collection of historical directories. I was alerted to this by Peter Scott's Library Blog Newsletter (<http://blog.xrefer.com/>)

Historical Directories is produced and owned by the University of Leicester. It is a digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales from 1750 to 1919, and includes reproductions of comparatively rare books, and sources research into local and genealogical history. My initial interest was on the business side as I am sometimes asked how to find information on small, local companies going back 50 to 100 years. I quickly discovered, though, that for my own location (Caversham in Berkshire) the Kelly's directories for 1914 and 1915 included residential listings. I ended up spending a couple of hours researching who had lived in my house, who the neighbours had been and their occupations.

The project aims to provide at least one directory for each geographical area for the 1850s, 1890s and the 1910s.

Pre-1850s, there is a small selection of directories published between 1750 up to 1849.

Since the project is based at the University of Leicester, special in-depth coverage is given to Leicestershire. There is also substantial coverage of London and Wales. The Historical Directories project does not attempt to publish every directory available between 1750 and 1919 and only covers England and Wales.

Not only can you identify which directories are available but you can "open" an individual directory, browse and carry out searches within it. You can search by location, decade or keywords.

In your results list there is a link to each individual directory and a link to each

directory's Fact File, which contains bibliographic information and hyperlinks to the main chapter headings.

Once you have a directory "open" you can search for keywords within that. You can then view the pages that contain your search terms, which are highlighted, and print off interesting pages.

There are sophisticated search features which enable you to narrow down your search considerably. For a phrase just type in the words next to one another, for example Star Road. If, on the other hand, you are looking for a person their name may appear as surname, middle name(s), first name. For this type of search there is a "within" operator, for example George w/3 Bloggs will look for George within three words of Bloggs in any order.

The wildcard is a question mark (?) and replaces a single character. The asterisk replaces 0 or more characters. Wildcards can be used at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word. Details of additional operators can be found in the site's help files.

So who did live in my house in 1914/1915? Number 88 Star Road, or number 6 Webb's Cottages as it then was, was home to Charles Herbert and his wife Mary who was a shopkeeper. Neighbours included a wheelright, carpenter, window cleaner, builder, two pub landlords and an insurance agent. Apart from the wheelright, not much difference from today's residents!

Yell introduces Super Search

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

UK Yellow Pages service Yell.com has launched Super Search making it easier to find relevant services and suppliers.

Super Search give results from more than one of Yell's classifications at the same time. It also looks within the listings and their web sites to find the ones that contain all of your keywords and puts these at the top of your results. Previously you could only search for single category headings or keywords that were in the main yellow pages entries.

If you are looking for a widescreen TV you can enter "widescreen tv" instead of just "tv" and Super Search will display results from

the Home Cinema and TV, Video & Radio Shops classifications on the search results page putting the businesses whose listings contain the words "widescreen tv" at the top of the page.

News

MSN launches Newsbot

Microsoft has launched a test version of a news service that aims to compete with Google's News search. Called Newsbot, it covers more than 4,800 English language sources compared with Google's 4,500. Newsbot was launched as part of MSNBC.com, a news web site that is a partnership between Microsoft and NBC News. It will be available for a limited time so that the company can gather feedback. It will then be taken down and replaced by the final version. The UK version can be found at <http://uk.newsbot.msn.com/>.

At present it is a rather basic service compared with its main competitor. Results are sorted by relevance (there is no sort by date option); you cannot select a date range, source, or country of origin; it doesn't have the coverage of local and regional papers that Google has; and there is no alerting service. It does, though, cluster similar stories together.

It scores over Google News with its history and personalization features. As you read stories, the site tracks the topics that you are interested in and suggests similar stories in related areas. Newsbot displays a list of recently read stories at the bottom of each page in the "Your history" section. Your search history is saved and displayed under the search box on each page so that you can repeat a search for a topic.

Miscellaneous

Abook4All- used books and rare books specialists

<http://www.abook4all.com/>

A "quality independent UK out of print online-bookstore". A useful alternative to Abebooks (<http://www.abebooks.com/>).

Libor Rates - British Bankers Association

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

Not a new resource but included here because so many people keep asking where they can find Libor rates and in particular historic rates. The BBA provides details of rates in Excel format and going back to 1986.

WordCount

<http://www.wordcount.org/main.php>

Many thanks to Phil Bradley who posted this interesting and highly addictive site to the discussion list LIS-LINK at the end of July (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/lis-link.html>). According to the WordCount web site this is "an artistic experiment in the way we use language. It presents the 86,800 most frequently used English words, ranked in order of commonality. Each word is scaled to reflect its frequency relative to the words that precede and follow it, giving a visual barometer of relevance."

"WordCount data currently comes from the British National Corpus, a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent an accurate cross-section of current English usage."

You can have hours of fun with this. 'Online' comes in at a mere 10113. The previous word at 10112 is 'puzzle' which I guess sums up the way many of us regard online. A little more worrying are the two words that come after online - 'unmarried purchasers'. Oh dear!

WordCount is designed and developed by Jonathan Harris of the wonderfully named Flaming Toast Productions in conjunction with the FABRICA studio of Italy.

Searching Questions

Historical stock exchange data

Question

I have been asked to find monthly data on the stock exchanges of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh. In particular, we need the monthly capitalisation, turn over, value traded, International market integration, and volatility for 30 years.

<http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/archives/2004/jul2004.shtml>

Answer

Thomson Financial

(<http://www.thomson.com/financial/financial.jsp>) probably have the data, if it exists, but it is a subscription service and can be expensive. Have you tried the stock exchanges themselves? The South Asian Federation of Exchanges (<http://www.safe-asia.org/>) has information on its members and summary statistics for some of them, but I do not think they have the level of detail that you require. The stock exchange web sites themselves may have some data. I have a list of exchanges by country on my own web site at <http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/stocks.htm>

Another approach is to see if any of the central banks have published this information. The relevant banks in this case are:

State Bank of Pakistan

<http://www.sbp.org.pk/>

Central Bank of Bangladesh

<http://www.bangladesh-bank.org/>

Reserve Bank of India <http://www.rbi.org.in/>

Nepal Rastra Bank <http://www.nrb.org.np/>

Central Bank of Sri Lanka

<http://www.lanka.net/centralbank/>

A useful list of central banks web sites can be found at <http://www.bis.org/cbanks1.htm> and <http://www.centralbanking.co.uk/>

I had a quick look at the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, and it looks as though they may have what you need in their Monthly Bulletin, but not for the number of the years you are looking at. For both the stock exchanges and the central banks, it may be worth identifying contact names from the web sites and getting in touch with them. If the information you require is not on the web, they may have it in their files and be able to send it to you direct.

Another source is Global Financial Data (<http://www.globalfindata.com/>), which is a priced service. You can search the database by country, and view a list of the datasets along with a description of the contents. The price of each file and dataset varies from USD 40 to USD 70.

These things are sent to try us

Pesky pop-ups - yet again!!

So you've installed the Google toolbar to block pop-ups. Or maybe you are using a pre 5.5. version of Internet Explorer and have installed one of the many pop-up zapping utilities. But a pop-up keeps appearing on your machine every time you use IE. It does not appear to be related to a particular web site and pops up regardless of whatever page you are visiting. It is driving you mad!

Assuming that your pop-up blocker is working, and that your virus software and firewall are up to date there are two other possible causes of this.

The first is that your browser has been hijacked by something. The best way of checking that is to run a spyware detection and zapping program. I regularly run two on my PCs: Spybot Search & Destroy and AdAware. Spybot can be found at <http://www.safer-networking.org/>. AdAware is at <http://www.lavasoftusa.com/>. Spybot is free and there is a free standard version of AdAware.

There is a comparison of spyware detection programs at <http://www.adwarereport.com/mt/archives/000004.html>

The second possibility is that it is Messenger Service, which comes as part of Windows NT, 2000 and XP. This is nothing to do with Windows Messenger (formerly known as MSN Messenger). Messenger Service was intended to be a quick way for network administrators in companies to send a message to all users on the network. Spammers soon got in on the act. Most firewalls should be able to stop them - by default they use TCP port 139 or UDP port 135 but these ports can be used by legitimate services. The best approach is to disable the Messenger Service.

The procedure may vary slightly depending on your operating system and the degree of customisation (if any).

To disable Messenger Service:

i) Click on Start, Settings, Control Panel, (possibly also Performance & Maintenance).

ii) Then open Administrative Tools, Services

iii) Scroll down to Messenger and double click on it.

iv) Under the General tab:
Service status - click "Stop"
Startup Type - select "Disabled"

v) Then click on Apply and OK

You should now be pop-up free.

Any variations on the above procedure that users are aware of will be gratefully received.

Gizmo of the month

Copyscape

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

Copyscape finds copies of your content on the web. You can use Copyscape to identify sites that have copied your content without permission or to find out who is quoting your site. You have to enter the URL of your page: it does not work with chunks of text.

So far I have not found anyone copying my pages wholesale but it was gratifying (!) to discover that several sites have linked to them with one sentence "quotes".

There are also links to resources about copyright and plagiarism.

Meetings and Workshops

Workshop: Key Business Sources on the Net

Organiser: Manchester Business School

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: MBS, Manchester

Date: Wednesday, 22nd September 2004

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

URL:

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

This course 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

Workshop: Searching the Internet: Beyond Google

Organiser: UKOLUG

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: Netskills Training Suite, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Date: Wednesday, 29th September 2004

Course fee: UKOLUG members £130 + VAT. Others £160 + VAT.

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

The aim of this workshop is to provide delegates with an essential toolkit to help them search more effectively. A significant part of the day will be taken up with practical sessions: exercises will be provided but delegates are free to try out searches of their own.

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

Organiser: TFPL

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: TFPL, London

Date: Thursday, 7th October 2004

Course fee: £295 + VAT

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

Workshop: Advanced Internet Search Strategies

Organiser: Manchester Business School

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Venue: MBS, Manchester

Date: Wednesday, 27th October 2004

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

URL:

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

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