FreePint®

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Helping 65,000 people use the Web for their work

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ABOUT FREE PINT

FreePint is an online network of information searchers. Members receive this free newsletter twice a month: it is packed with tips on finding quality and reliable business information on the Internet.

Joining is free at <http://www.freepint.com/> and provides access to a substantial archive of articles, reviews, jobs & events, with answers to research questions and networking at the FreePint Bar.

Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out. To receive a fully formatted version as an attachment or a brief notification when it's online, visit <http://www.freepint.com/member>.

EDITORIAL

I've been called a lot of things in my six years with FreePint, but 'InfoPimp' is a new one. I suppose it is justified, considering our appearance at the Online Information show last week in London.

Since we were launching the new business information publication 'VIP' <http://www.vivavip.com>, our stand at this major information trade show was themed around the 'VIP Lounge'. We alternated between blue and red velvet suits and enjoyed flashing lights and dotty Dalmatian drapes. If you couldn't attend, or haven't seen the photos yet, then enjoy a quick browse: <http://www.freepint.com/portal/events/>.

The show marks the end of a very tiring but fulfilling year at FreePint. We've been through a total rebranding of all our services and FreePint's network of sister sites (including Willco, ResourceShelf and KeepingLegal) has grown considerably <http://www.willco.com/customers/>. We've welcomed new editors to FreePint (Annabel Colley) and VIP (Pam Foster) and published a number of popular reports, with more in the pipeline. We've launched the URL shortening service DigBig.com and are lining up a number of virtual 'Exchange' workshops for the new year.

It's also exciting to have been involved in recognising achievement around the information industry, with FreePint recently judging and sponsoring a number of industry awards. These include the 'FreePint/Online Information Customer Service Award', whose worthy winner is xrefer, for keeping members of its team and customers closely connected throughout the support and development process. The recipient of this year's 'FreePint/CILIP Online Community Award' is AccountingWEB. They not only run a popular virtual community but have made it financially viable too. Press releases and photos of all awards are available online at <http://www.freepint.com/press/>.

In today's newsletter, FreePint's Editor Annabel Colley looks at two recent information events and asks: what makes a successful conference? There is also the annual update to our ever-popular review of business rankings around the world. We'll be sending out the latest FreePint Index shortly too, the popular quick-reference guide to all the topics ever covered by FreePint.

As I hand over the editorship of FreePint, it's delightful to see everything gradually falling into place. With such a great team and continued support from our membership I think the FreePint family has an exciting future lined up. I will, however, just point out that red velvet isn't my regular office attire and that I'm not currently lounging on the shagpile rug.

William Hann
Managing Editor, FreePint
<william.hann@freepint.com>

FREEPINT JOBS
<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

This week's selected listings are below. All new jobs are posted to the Bar and Bar Digest (circulation 12,000+) and sent to the 1000+ subscribers to the Job Update.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Policy Advisor - FOI
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2839>
Prestigious media org needs Policy Advisor for FoI and other areas, challenging role & excellent £ Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

Financial Services Sector Analyst
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2890>
Senior Financial Services Researcher for top consultancy. Excellent client facing and project management skills. Top salary. Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Information Officer
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2891>
Information professional with an interest in health information with good interpersonal skills. Recruiter: Multiple Sclerosis Trust

Information Systems Manager
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2892>
Exciting opportunity for experienced knowledge/information systems developer to join a key Government Department.
Recruiter: Intelligent Resources

Information Liaison Manager
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2893>
A key role with responsibility for co-ordinating knowledge and info management initiatives throughout a complex organisation.
Recruiter: Intelligent Resources

What is the ResourceShelf?
<http://www.resourceshelf.com>

ResourceShelf is a free daily update containing news of interest to information professionals around the world.

Topics include the latest news with web search engines, research tips, new web resources, and much more.

Glen Recruitment

Data Protection for Websites and Intranets
ISBN 1-904769-02-0

This report provides an introduction to data protection issues as they relate to websites, intranets and the online world. It draws attention to areas of particular concern to website & intranet managers such as: the use of cookies; entries in online directories; monitoring employees' email and internet access; use of email for direct marketing.

<http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/>

VIP - Business Information News and Reviews

Register for VIP, a new publication with business information product reviews and news analysis.

Find out more about the range of free and fee-based services:

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

Online Community Hosting = Willco

FreePint's sister company Willco hosts a large number of online communities, many of which you may already be familiar with.

Find out more about Willco Modules for hosting newsletters and forums, and read testimonials from current customers:

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

New White Paper from Factiva

Do you need to manage and organise large volumes of data? Are users within your organization finding precisely the information they need? Factiva's Taxonomy White Paper examines the value brought to our news and business information service, to clients who license the taxonomy as a fundamental component of their own Enterprise Information Architecture. Download the White Paper at <http://www.factiva.com/redirects/whitepaper/register/freepint>

MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES
by Veronica Bezear

Veronica Bezear is an Information Officer working for Surrey County Council's Adults and Community Care service. She writes here in a personal capacity.

Tell us about your favourite Web sites. Check out the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>, then email <penny@freepint.com>.

- <http://www.christmas.com> - Particularly good sections under 'worldview' on Christmas traditions around the world by country and a list of how to say happy Christmas in almost every language.

- <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/odeng/modeng0.browse.html> - Fantastic list of online books from the Virginia State University's Electronic Text Centre. Includes the full text of Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" online.

- <http://www.aaronshep.com/storytelling/index.html> - Free 'how to' resources on oral storytelling. Includes ready-to-perform stories to try out - seasonal ones include "The Bakers Dozen - A St Nicholas Tale" and "The Christmas Truce".

- <http://www.ingeb.ORG> - German site collecting words and midi files for songs from around the world. Follow the Christmas link from their home page and put together your own carol concert.

- <http://www.epicurious.com> - Magazine collecting recipes and food writing from around the world. Enjoy an armchair tour through their Christmas recipe list from Cuban suckling pig to Polish Wild Mushroom Pierogies.

EVENTS

United Kingdom

- "Schools and Public Libraries Working Together" - organised by the Centre for Information Research (CIRT), University of Central England. Focussing on "how they can best support reader development, information skills and study support and the possibilities for joint staff training and networking" - 21st January 2004 in Birmingham <http://www.freepint.com/go/e264>.

- The Scottish Enterprise's "eLearnInternational World Summit 2004" - designed to facilitate an examination among practitioners,consultants, academics and government officials on Futures for eLearning. Edinburgh on the 18th - 19th February 2004 <http://www.freepint.com/go/e241>.

- "Building and sustaining a Collaborative Working Environment" on 4th - 5th March 2004 Ark Group "implement a successful collaborative working initiative to inspire knowledge workers and better serve your clients." London <http://www.freepint.com/go/e274>.

The Netherlands

- "Gartner Business Intelligence Summit 2004" in Amsterdam on 2nd - 3rd February 2004 will look at strategies to deal with business intelligence <http://www.freepint.com/go/e273>.

Penny <penny@freepint.com>

FREE PINT BAR
In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company

We welcome the special edition postings from Gary Price, Editor of ResourceShelf.com, and the interesting item about the economic value of the British Library <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26890>.

There's a valuable thread about the renewal policies of a number of large information vendors (yes, names are named). If you have anything to do with signing agreements with organisations like Lexis Nexis, Factiva and Dialog, then I would recommend a read <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26765>. Of course, this is a topic we know a bit about since we've published a report on negotiating licenses for electronic products <http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/>.

Having talked about things like intranets for so long, it's refreshing to get back-to-basics questions. It's a good reminder that many people are just starting out on the development road. So, perhaps you can share your experience on whether to build an intranet yourself or buy a package off-the-shelf <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26830>.

Can you help someone with budgetary concerns about a project they're involved with, offering archival 3D digitization services to museums and libraries <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26841>? How about evidence to suggest that giving crimes publicity acts as a deterrent <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26858>?

On the Webmaster front there's been just a little uproar about recent changes to Google's site ranking algorithm <http://www.freepint.com/go/b26641>. Sites that were in the top ten are now not to be found. SearchEngine Watch have been keeping their eye on things, with articles like "What happened to my site on Google?" <http://digbig.com/3hcg> and "What happened to my searches on Google?" <http://digbig.com/3hch>. It makes interesting reading for anyone concerned about their Google ranking, and you can check out the seasonally topical 'Scroogle' and 'The Filter Test'. ResourceShelf also points to an interesting piece about a possible Google IPO next year, entitled 'Can Google Grow Up?' <http://digbig.com/3gec>.

William Hann <william.hann@freepint.com>

The FreePint Bar is where you can get help with your tricky research questions, for free! <www.freepint.com/bar>

Help with study for information-related courses is available at the FreePint Student Bar <www.freepint.com/student>.

Twice-weekly email digests of the latest postings can be requested at <www.freepint.com/member>.

TIPS ARTICLE

"Taking a look at media information professionals and asking: what makes a successful conference"
By Annabel Colley

Annabel Colley is editor of FreePint. Details of her previous career are at <http://www.vivavip.com/people.html>. She is currently running a training course on 'News And Media Information on the Internet' http://www.aslib.com/training/1/media.html

This week, the information industry is talking about the Online Information exhibition and conference which FreePint attended last week. Exhibiting at the show this year was particularly successful for us, giving us the chance to build our brand and meet and greet readers, advertisers and authors at the FreePint stand. Although it seems to get smaller each year, it's still a major event in the information industry calendar, attracting an international audience of around 750 delegates to the conference with 250 companies exhibiting.

From a large conference to a much smaller one. Last month, I was invited to the conference of the Association of UK Media Librarians (AUKML) <http://www.aukml.org.uk>. The AUKML creates links between librarians and information workers in all areas of the media industry. Members come from newspaper and magazine publishing, broadcasting organisations and academic institutions, mainly in the UK, but they particularly welcome international members. Around 50 delegates gathered for a friendly conference held, this year, at the London Television Centre. The theme was "Conquering the Past: Embracing Our Future." Topics included: providing information at times of national crisis; picture research in the digital age; new library jargon in recruitment (ever heard of a 'data warrior'?); and managing legal risk areas in news archiving.

Impartial briefings for parliament

A highlight was Carole Andrews' and Tim Youngs' relevant and engaging talk on the work of the House of Commons research and library services <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/g18.pdf>. The library provides an impartial and confidential information and research service to members of parliament and their staff. Tim Youngs, senior research analyst in international affairs and defence, explained how when he had joined the House of Commons Library in 1997, he knew he would be responsible for writing briefings on issues relating to the Middle East, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia and arms control. However, nobody could have predicted that he would have had such a crucial role -- to react quite so quickly to so many international crises -- in such a short time. He explained that although the government (rather than parliament) takes the lead in making a decision to commit forces to war, MPs need independent sources to make their own minds up. This is where the impartial House of Commons research and briefings come in <http://digbig.com/3gwe>. I certainly found these briefings invaluable when I was researching for current affairs programmes at the BBC and it was good to meet the author of so many of them.

News libraries - newspaper morgues no more

Charles Oppenheim, Professor of Information Science at Loughborough University chaired the conference and gave the first Justin Arundale memorial lecture. Justin Arundale, who died prematurely last year, was one of the first qualified librarians to work in Fleet Street (the historic birthplace of journalism in the UK). The professional status now enjoyed by librarians in the media and the shift in focus of newspaper libraries from 'morgue' to 'profit centre' owe much to Justin's influence and his pioneering work at The Independent. The changes to news librarianship, internationally, since the 1970s have been phenomenal.

Gone are the 'news morgues' - cuttings libraries with librarians as the gatekeepers. What are emerging are 21st century news librarians who train journalists in Internet research, procure multi-user licences of electronic databases for corporate intranets and run Web sites. It's a picture familiar across many other sectors of the information industry. Oppenheim stressed the importance of a close working relationship between journalists and information professionals working in the media.

As a former media librarian and journalist myself, I must agree with him. In a 2002 article for the then Library Association Record (now CILIP update) <http://digbig.com/3gwf> I reviewed the changes in media libraries during the time that I was a chair of the AUKML. The issues of computer-assisted journalism and the move out onto the editorial floor of librarians remains a challenge. It is an issue with which members of the News Division of the SLA also continually wrestle <http://digbig.com/3gwg>. The AUKML and The News Division of the SLA maintain close links.

If you work, teach in, or study the media, joining the mailing lists of the AUKML or the NewsLib, means you may never be stuck again for obtaining crucial research when deadlines press. Information on how to join both of these is available on their web sites. Finally, the SLA News Division's International List of Newspaper Archives is an essential source for all News Librarians, since it lays out exactly how far back free archives of newspapers on the web go <http://digbig.com/3gwh>.

Online and on deadline

The technology may change, but what never changes in news librarianship is the urgency of deadlines and the importance of editorial judgement: getting to the story first; but getting it right. As information is so widely available on the Internet, arguably deadlines have become even more pressurised as user expectations have increased. Katharine Schopflin of the BBC and chair-elect of the AUKML, gave a refreshingly sceptical presentation on evaluating news sources at Online International. Gary Price, always a popular speaker where ever he goes, is a big fan of news librarians, and he makes it his business to maintain links with both the AUKML and the SLA News Division. His News Center <http://www.freepint.com/gary/newscenter.htm> and Speech and Transcript Center <http://www.freepint.com/gary/speech.htm> are increasingly popular with journalists who, until they discover new resources, may be 'googleaholicks'.

Small is beautiful

Although the AUKML is small (around 170 members) it is important for two key reasons. Firstly, it embodies the strength of a niche community. Its events and meetings involve lots

of peer-to-peer, fun networking. Secondly, it understands journalism and what makes journalists tick. Larger professional bodies like the SLA and CILIP can draw on the AUKML's expertise to help develop more visibility in the media. To quote Charles Oppenheim, AUKML conference chair, AUKML people are 'proactive lively ravers' and anyone who has been to their conferences will certainly agree. Based in London, their recent conference was very well organised with social visits to the Globe Theatre, and the Guardian newspaper. Drinks were held at the Guardian newsroom <http://www.guardian.co.uk/newsroom/> which is an archive and visitor centre that preserves and promotes the histories and values of the Guardian and Observer newspapers through archive, education and exhibitions. A celebration of liberal journalism, the current exhibitions, like the papers themselves, are unique. The current 'Orwell Observed' exhibition <http://digbig.com/3gwj> includes the first ever display of Orwell's infamous list of fellow writers and journalists whom he considered to be crypto-communists, and held by the UK Government until recently recovered.

Newspapers for historical research

The Guardian was founded the day Napoleon died and the Observer the week Mozart died. For those interested in using newspapers for historical research, there is an archive dating back to 1899 <http://www.guardiancentury.co.uk/>. According to Mark Holland of Thompson/Gale, another speaker at the AUKML conference, students are increasingly being asked to work with primary sources and his demonstration of the Times Digital Archive was fascinating. Available on subscription, <http://www.galeuk.com/times/tda_fact.pdf> and using the latest digital and film reproduction technology, researchers can search and access full-page facsimiles of every page from the Times from 1785-1985.

To find out more about life as a media information professional, take a look at 'Deadline', the journal of the AUKML. You can read about the contrasting days in the lives of the busy chief librarian at Time Out magazine in London <http://www.aukml.org.uk/deadoct03.htm#art8> and at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London <http://www.aukml.org.uk/deadoct03.htm#art6>. The article entitled 'September 11: three accounts from newsrooms in Pakistan, UK and Canada', is also very revealing <http://www.aukml.org.uk/deadnov01.htm#art2>.

Niche associations at the Online Information exhibition

There are lots of niche and smaller associations in the information world. Some are sub-groups of larger bodies, but quite a few choose to remain independent because they think it is beneficial to do so. In addition to the AUKML, at Online this year were speakers and events on behalf of AIIP <http://www.aiip.org/> (the Association of Independent Information Professionals), CIG <http://www.cityinformation.org.uk/>, the European Association of Information Services, <http://www.eusidic.org/> and the National

Federation of Science Abstracting and Indexing Services <http://www.nfais.org/>. Other popular sessions were by Cynthia Shamel, President of AIIP, on how to set up as an independent information broker, and David Gurteen on how to use knowledge cafes. Case studies have revealed that using knowledge cafes can help to break down the 'silo' mentality in very large companies <http://www.gurteen.com/>. Sheila Webber also gave a truly international update on information literacy <http://digbig.com/3gwk>.

This was the first year that Online ran a separate 'associations room'. These were fairly successful, but early feedback revealed that if events in the associations room had been marketed alongside the free exhibition hall seminars, attendance would have been better for some of the sessions.

Globalisation of information

The broad themes of the Online Information conference this year were Communities of Practice, Information Architecture and Content Management. The strength of Online Information is that it is international, with sessions held in five languages. As executive director of the SLA Janice Lachance said at a breakfast hosted by the European Chapter of the SLA, "Information knows no boundaries, there is no mountain range, ocean or border that can stop the flow of information". Surely rather idealistic for so early in the morning? But librarians, so strong on communication, are often weak on aspiration. A visionary and global view is what is needed now from an organisation that had in the past been accused of being too US centric. The feeling from the European Chapter was that this was a good omen.

Maintain the human touch

At times it felt like many of the speakers on the themes of communities of practice, KM and content management, were giving us new spin on old themes. Many delegates I talked to found the practical approach of the free exhibition hall seminars the most useful. Ultimately, what it always seems to come back to is communication. However big you grow, it is important to maintain the human touch. Managing and building personal relationships face-to-face, peer-to-peer is the key.

Well-run conference and exhibitions, big and small, facilitate this in the best way. Delegates at both the AUKML and Online Information conferences, despite their difference in size, came away with ideas to reshape business, increase productivity or just with a handful of tips and web sites, relevant to their organisations. Richard Mcdermott, the keynote speaker on Communities of Practice at Online Information, thinks that one of the most important components in making a community successful is "finding people who are passionate about their topic, giving them the right amount of structure and support and then allowing them to flourish". Often smaller and niche groups flourish independently and feed back into the bigger picture. Let passionate people talk, then provide a social space for debate and networking, and you have a successful conference.

FEATURE ARTICLE
" From Fortune 500 to Handelsblatt's European 500 two years on - a final look at some useful European and International Rankings "
By Helen Clegg

Helen Clegg is Senior Marketing Analyst with RR Donnelley in London. She holds the Advanced Certificate in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing and an M.Sc in Library and Information Studies. She is a Board Member of the European Chapter of the Special Libraries Association of America. Helen writes here in a personal capacity.

Introduction

In issue 120 of FreePint, which appeared on September 5th 2002, I reviewed my original article on rankings and noted that there seemed to be a stealthy move to classify rankings as premium content rather than making them available for free on the Internet. In this article, I take a final look at the European and international rankings I reviewed last year, noting any changes and conclude with a brief overview of some useful eastern European, globalization and world-competitiveness lists.

Western Europe

UK

The Financial Times Global 500 ranking appeared as scheduled in May 2002 <http://www.ft.com>. Like last year, the Global 500 is still only available to subscribers of FT.com and therefore premium content. As a non-subscriber, I wasn't able to review it for functionality and content, but the Financial Times is an excellent and authoritative source and one of the best places to start if you're looking for rankings. This year's Global 500 has rankings on the US 500, including Latin American and Canadian tables, the UK 500, including European tables, the Japan 500, including the Asia 100 and also lists top companies in Eastern Europe, the Middle East as well as sub-Saharan Africa. If you don't want to subscribe to the FT.com site and don't subscribe to the Financial Times either, my suggestion is to remember that the Global 500 ranking is scheduled to appear sometime during the second week of May each year and just buy the newspaper when the ranking is published. A useful ranking if you're looking specifically for Scottish companies is a Top 500 ranking published by the Business Insider website <http://www.insider.co.uk>. This was recommended to me by a FreePint reader last year. Companies included in this ranking must generate 90% of their turnover in Scotland. You can choose to rank companies by turnover or alphabetically.

Germany

WirtschaftsWoche, one of Germany's weekly business magazines, published its rankings again this year <http://www.wiwo.de>. You'll find the rankings mentioned on the homepage under the hyperlink "Die 500 Groessten Unternehmen Europas". The ranking is much the same as last year's, in that it is dynamic and you can rank by turnover, number of employees, market capitalization and profit. Or you can choose an industry sector and combine this with a country to make your own ranking. This year, the ranking has been expanded to cover Poland, Russia and Hungary. I searched on the top Russian companies ranked by turnover and according to Wirtschaftswoche, Gazprom is number one, Lukoil number two and Unified Energy System number three.

Manager Magazin's rankings haven't changed much in a year either <http://www.manager-magazin.de>. The business magazine produces the E-100, a ranking which notes how well German companies are integrating internet technology into their businesses as well as a Euro 500 ranking, which lists the top publicly quoted European companies. The E-100 ranking is under the E-business + Medien hyperlink at the top of the homepage. The dynamic ranking lets you sort by industry sector, but as this is a qualitative rather than a quantitative ranking, you can't really rank by anything, so the listing is alphabetic. However, it's easy to work out which company has the most integrated internet technology by reading the description of its e-business strategy in the right-hand column. I searched on the retail sector and found that Otto Versand, the largest German mail order company, appears to be the number one when it comes to internet technology. The Euro 500 ranking is under "Geld + Boerse", just as it was last year. Again, it's a dynamic ranking, so you can choose to rank by a number of criteria including turnover, turnover growth, turnover, market capitalization or number of employees. An additional criterion by which to rank is the "MM Bewertung" - this is basically a rating given to each company by Manager Magazin.

France

No changes to the French rankings this year. You'll find the company ranking provided by Les Echos, one of France's leading business newspapers, on its website at <http://www.lesechos.fr>. To get to them, choose one of the industry sectors listed on the left-hand side of the homepage; choosing one of these categories takes you to a page dedicated to that particular industry, then just click on the "Classements CA" hyperlink. The functionality of these French industry rankings is much the same as last year. You can rank by turnover, net profit, export value or number of employees. By checking out the "Dynamisme" hyperlink, you can find out the number of companies that have been created or that have collapsed in a particular industry within a particular department of France or within France as a whole. For very detailed ratings, I still recommend the Coface Group website, to which I drew attention last year <http://www.cofacerating.fr>. Another site worth checking out for French rankings is that of the business magazine L'Expansion <http://www.lexpansion.com>. L'Expansion does four rankings and apart from the fact that there are less companies in its lists this year, the rankings remain the same:

- Les 1152 groupes industriels et de services (Top 1152 industrial and service companies)
- Les 140 entreprises commerciales (Top 140 commercial organizations)
- Les 95 banques et institutions financieres (Top 95 banks and financial institutions)
- Les 36 compagnies d'assurance (Top 36 insurance companies)

To navigate to these rankings from the homepage, click on the "Entreprises/High Tech" hyperlink and then on the "Fiches entreprises 1000". You can also generate your own ranking list by choosing an industry sector, a region of France and by specifying your own ranking criteria from a predetermined list. For example,

the top three French companies ranked by turnover in the publishing/communications sector are Vivendi Universale, Publicis Group and Havas.

Luxembourg

Luxembourg's official statistics office produces useful rankings of Luxembourg companies. The only drawback is that the rankings are by number of employees rather than turnover. You'll find them at <http://statec.gouvernement.lu>. To locate them, navigate to the site map and choose "Download files" where you'll find two rankings in PDF format:

- 2003 Les principales entreprises par taille (Top companies ranked by number of employees)
- 2003 Les principales entreprises par secteur (Top companies by industry sector, ranked by number of employees)

Rankings for the two previous years are also listed and available for download.

Spain

Actualidad Economica is the place to find comprehensive rankings on Spanish companies <http://www.actualidad-economica.com>. The hyperlink to the ranking is right at the top of the homepage under "Base de datos". As with previous years, these rankings are classed as premium content. For EUR 60 you can get access to "Las 5000 Mayores Empresas" - Spain's Top 5000 companies.

Sweden

Last year I found some useful Swedish rankings on the website of Affarsvarlden, one of Sweden's leading business magazines. This year I couldn't find them at all. While searching for them I came across a 2003 ranking for Norway's Top 500 companies instead.

Norway

A ranking of Norway's Top 500 companies is published annually by Dagens Naeringsliv, a leading business newspaper in Norway. The easiest way to find the rankings is to type "Norges 500" into Google and scroll down until you see a url which ends in dn.no. Otherwise, try typing in the following url to your browser: <http://arkiv.dn.no/dn/avisen/500%20stoerste/500.asp>. The ranking is all in Norwegian. It ranks Norway's top companies by 2002 turnover. A nice find!

Switzerland

Handelszeitung <http://www.handelszeitung.ch> published its annual ranking of Swiss companies this year, but it remains classified as premium content and is in database format. Follow the hyperlink "Die groessten Unternehmen in der Schweiz" which is under "Management" on the left-hand side of the homepage. The database classifies companies into 70 sectors. As well as creating your own ranking, you can also buy predefined rankings, such as the Swiss Top 500, the Swiss Top 1000 or Top 30 Banks. Costs for the predefined rankings range from CHF 5 to 40. Subscribers to Handelszeitung get a better deal.

GOLD

This time last year Catherine Ebenezer looked at how medical knowledge is created, shaped, shared and applied. Joe Tarrant gave a few guidelines on becoming a systems librarian with a list of the qualities you might need.

- FreePint No.126 28th November 2002. "Health Informatics on the Web" and "Ping, touch, head, tail: or, how to become a systems librarian"
  http://www.freepint.com/issues/281102.htm

Two years ago Patrick Hartary's tips article listed some sites where photos can be downloaded free from the Web. Martin White's feature looked at Communities of Practice.

- FreePint No.101, 29th November 2001. "Picture This: 'Free' Photos on the Web" and "Communities of Practice"
  http://www.freepint.com/issues/291101.htm

Three years ago James Hatts gathered a list of useful railway sites for passengers and researchers. Ray Templeton and Danny Birchall's feature about TV and film sites included careers and training, organisations and funding, the movie business etc.

- * FreePint No.76, 30th November 2000. "Britain's Railway Industry Web Sites" and "Web Sources for Film and Television Information"
  http://www.freepint.com/issues/301100.htm

If you are a welfare worker (e.g. advice worker, counsellor, solicitor) or an information worker or librarian you may like to look at Alan Humphreys' tips article. Tom Hartley discussed how the Internet can help the estate agency business.

- FreePint No.51, 2nd December 1999. "UK Help and Welfare Information on the Web" and "Homepages: Househunting on the Internet"
  http://www.freepint.com/issues/021299.htm

Five years ago Diana Grimwood-Jones gave us some tips on finding case studies on the Web and Katherine Allen summarised Online 98.

- FreePint No.27, 26th November 1998. "Business Management Case Studies" and "Online Information 98 Preview"
  http://www.freepint.com/issues/261198.htm

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International

USA

For the last two years, Fortune's rankings have been free at <http://www.fortune.com>. This year, Fortune has classified many of its rankings as premium content, so you have to be a subscriber to retrieve them, which is a shame. However two rankings which are free are:

- 100 Fastest Growing Companies
- Small Business 100

Fortune's premium content rankings include:

- Fortune 500
- Global 500
- 100 Best companies to work for
- America's most admired
- Global most admired
- 50 Best for minorities
- Best of 2003-11-30

If you only need the names of the top 50 Fortune 500, you can get these by clicking on the Fortune 500 hyperlink.

Last year, I noted that you had to register with Forbes to get access to the Forbes rankings. This year, you don't need to register at all and all the rankings are available for free at <http://www.forbes.com>. They are easy to find under the "Lists" tab at the top of the homepage. Forbes's lists include:

- 200 Best small companies
- 400 Best big companies
- Forbes 500
- Forbes International 500
- Global 200
- Largest private companies
- 100 Top celebrities
- Executive pay
- World's richest people

The Forbes rankings are dynamic. With the Forbes International 500 you can rank by company, industry, revenues and enterprise multiple; with the Forbes 500 you can sort by rank, name, sales, profits, asset, market valuation or number of employees. Also worth noting is that historical rankings from 1997 are available on the website. Some interesting free rankings for the USA can be found on the Bizminer website <http://www.bizminer.com/free.asp> - a site recommended to me by a FreePint reader earlier this year. The Bizminer Vitality Review publishes a ranking each month, for example the top high growth firms in January 2003 and the top new branch development rankings for major industries in July 2003.

Australia

Business Review Weekly is the place to find authoritative rankings on Australian companies. Last year the rankings were available for free at <http://www.brw.com.au>. This year however, Business Review Weekly seems to be following the trend to classify its rankings as premium content so they're only accessible to subscribers. There don't seem to be as many rankings as last year either, for example I couldn't find a separate list for New Zealand's biggest companies or the list of Australia's best and worst performing industries. BRW's rankings include:

- 2003 BRW 1000
- 2003 Top public companies
- 2002 Top law firms
- 2003 Young Rich
- 2002 Top 50 Sport earners

Eastern Europe

With more and more companies doing business in Eastern Europe, I decided to see what rankings there were available on Eastern European companies. The most obvious place to start was the Financial Times, which looks at the top companies in Eastern Europe. However, it's always good to see if there are any rankings produced by domestic publishers, as these may often include more companies and give more detailed information. The disadvantage is that the rankings will very likely be in the country's mother tongue, so if you don't speak an Eastern European language, you'll have to find someone who does.

Hungary

Figyelo is a Hungarian magazine that publishes an annual Top 200 of Hungarian companies based on turnover. You'll find the Top 50 for 2002 at <http://www.fn.hu>, the homepage of Figyelo. To locate the rankings, type the word "top" into the search box at the very top right-hand corner of the homepage. This retrieves a number of hits containing the word "top". The first hit is a hyperlink entitled "Top 200 gala". This hyperlink takes you to another webpage. Here, click on the Top 200 hyperlink, which you'll find under the heading "Alrovatok". This page lists all the rankings available - in Hungarian of course!

Czech Republic

There are two good sources for Czech company rankings. The first is a ranking published annually by the Czech Top 100 Association at <http:///www.czechtop100.cz>. Follow the hyperlink on the left-hand side of the homepage "100 Nejvyznamnijsich". You can then choose which year you're interested in - there are tables from 1994 to 2001. The neat thing about these rankings is that they are all available for download in Excel format. Ranking criteria includes profitability and productivity. The second source for Czech company rankings is Top Press, available at <http://www.toppress.cz>. Follow the "100 nej" hyperlink to get to the rankings, Top Press publishes annual rankings, including the Top 100 Czech companies. However this is another publisher which classifies rankings as premium content and therefore only makes a selection of its rankings available for free on its website. All the selections are in PDF format - for example you can download the top 30 companies in 2001 ranked by turnover. If you want the complete rankings for 2001 though, you have to purchase them. Again, this website is all in Czech.

Russia

Last year I mentioned a website which gave comprehensive rankings for Russia that I found at <http://raexpert.ru>. The site is compiled by the Expert RA Ratings Agency based in Moscow. Here you'll find the 9th regular rating of the Top 200 Russian industrial companies both in Russian <http://www.raexpert.ru> and in English <http://www.raexpert.ru/ratings/exp200>. Scroll down to "baza dannych - rejting upravlajushikh kompanij" on the left-hand side of thehomepage to get to the ranking in Russian. The easiest way to get to the same ranking in English is to click on the "English" hyperlink at the top of the homepage, then follow the link to the "Expert 200 - industrial companies" ranking. The table ranks Russian companies by net sales in Roubles and also gives growth rate, pretax profit, net profit, net margin

and labor productivity per person. Figures are in Roubles and US dollars.

Poland

A reliable source for Polish company rankings is Rzeczpospolita. This business newspaper publishes an annual ranking of the Top 500 Polish companies, ranked by turnover. Again, the ranking is classified as premium content and only accessible once you have registered with the website and are prepared to pay. The best way to locate the list is to search in the archive using the search term "Lista 500".

Globalization

The international management consultancy AT Kearney produces a magazine called Foreign Policy on a regular basis. This year, Foreign Policy teamed up with the Center for Global Development to produce the first ever "Commitment to Development" index. According to AT Kearney's website, this index ranks 21 rich nations on whether their aid, trade, migration, investment, peacekeeping and environmental policies help or hurt poor nations. You can navigate to the ranking via AT Kearney's website at <http://www.atkearney.com>, following the hyperlink to the Foreign Policy magazine, or go direct to <http://foreignpolicy.com>. It's an interesting ranking and has some interactivity too. In the overall ranking for example, the UK scores 11 out of 21. For peacekeeping, it scores 3.6, trade 6.9, investment 3.4, environment 5.0, aid 3.0 and migration 3.1.

Globalization is much talked about these days. AT Kearney's Foreign Policy Magazine has produced a Globalization Index - the best way to find it is to type the words "globalization index" into the search function at the top of AT Kearney's homepage <http://www.atkearney.com>. This index ranks 50 countries based on their levels of economic, social, technological and political integration with the rest of the world. The latest ranking is for 2003 and can be downloaded in PDF format. You can also download the previous year's ranking for comparison. This year, top of the globalization ranking was Ireland, followed by Switzerland and Sweden. The website also includes information about the methodology and data used to construct the index.

World Competitiveness

If you're looking for rankings on world competitiveness, then check out the website of

IMD, one of Europe's leading business schools based in Switzerland. IMD publishes an annual world competitiveness ranking which in 2002 covered 49 countries and this year covers 59 countries. The ranking is published in the World Competitiveness Yearbook, but is made available on IMD's website <http://www01.imd.ch/wcy/ranking/>. Economies are ranked from most to least competitive. The ranking is divided into two parts - countries with a population of more than 20 million and countries with a population of less than 20 million. The drawbacks of the ranking are that it is static and alphabetic. In 2003, the USA was the most competitive country, followed by Australia and Canada. Past rankings from 1999 are available from the website and you can download all of them in PDF format. there are also hyperlinks to the criteria and methodology used by IMD.

Conclusion

There are lots of rankings available on the Internet and it would be an impossible task to evaluate them all in one article. As I mentioned in last year's article, a great place to start looking is Gary Price's List of Lists which you can now find at <http://www.specialissues.com>. This list does a fantastic job of collating many rankings, but does tend to have a US bias. In this article I have looked at some of the rankings available on Western European companies and also looked at a few for Eastern Europe. No doubt as globalization continues, there will be more eastern and central European company rankings and it is very likely that they will be increasingly available in the English language. It's a shame to note that authoritative publishers are continuing to classify rankings as premium content, but this is also a trend that is likely to continue. As global competition continues, publishers must find as many ways as possible to increase their revenues.

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