

## CONTENTS

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Jobs</b>	<b>2</b>
Information Manager Assistant Librarian Information Officer Information Officer Broadcast Media Researcher	
<b>My Favourite Tipples</b>	<b>3</b>
from Jane Macoustra	
<b>Tips Article</b>	<b>4</b>
"Professional Qualifications in Information and Knowledge Management" By Jela Webb	
<b>Bookshelf</b>	<b>6</b>
"E-learning and Teaching in Library and Information Services" Reviewed by Katherine Allen	
<b>Feature Article</b>	<b>7</b>
"Writing for the Web - How to Write Web-Friendly Content for your Site" By Steve Lee	
<b>Events and Gold Forthcoming Articles</b>	
<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>HTML Version</b>	
< <a href="http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.htm">http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.htm</a> >	
<b>Fully Formatted Acrobat Version</b>	
< <a href="http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.pdf">http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.pdf</a> >	

## ABOUT FREE PINT

FreePint is an online community 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 can picture it now ... A bustling speakeasy in downtown Manhattan. Roving hacks file daily dispatches and interrogate the influential. The only clue to their allegiance: snazzy FreePint felt fedoras.

Yes folks, we're in New York next week reporting to you live from the SLA conference. If you're unable to attend, then rely on us to post the latest news from this major event in the information calendar. Don't forget to send in your tricky interview questions.

Time is also running out if you wish to make a nomination for this year's CILIP/FreePint Online Community Award. Make your nomination for any online community from any sector by June 27th <<http://www.freepint.com/events/cilip-2003>>.

We've packed lots of goodies into today's FreePint. There are tips on creating Web-friendly content for your site and we hear one person's experience of studying for an information and knowledge management qualification.

There are also a selection of vacancies from FreePint Jobs. The database now has over 1,000 live job seeker profiles. So, if you're searching for a job or advertising a vacancy then check it out <<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>>.

Whilst you're online, make sure you visit the rest of the FreePint Web site too. Over 5,000 people now visit daily. There's lots of free advice and if you check out the Bar next week then you can read our dispatches from New York. Make sure you leave your feedback about today's edition of the FreePint at <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b23989>>.

Cheers  
William

William Hann BSc(Hons) MCLIP  
Founder and Managing Editor

Email: <[william@freepint.com](mailto:william@freepint.com)>  
Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044

Free Pint is a Registered Trademark of  
Free Pint Limited © 1997-2003

**FREE PINT JOBS**<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

FreePint Jobs -- a great place for information vacancies.

VACANCY SEARCHING -- free search and set up a weekly alert profile.

VACANCY RECRUITING -- Complete the form and advertise a vacancy for just GBP195

Find out more today at <http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

This week's selected listings are below. All new jobs are posted to the Bar and Bar Digest (circulation 11,000+) and matched against the 1000+ live job seeker profiles. This week's Bar listing is at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23957> and last week's at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23882>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

**Information Manager (Germany)**

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2481>  
German-speaking Information Manager for new high profile role in Germany in Financial Services sector.  
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

**Assistant Librarian: Electronic Resources Co-ordinator**

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2491>  
Play a key role in ensuring optimal management of access for all users to the Library's electronic resources.  
Recruiter: National University of Ireland, Galway

**Information Officer**

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2492>  
To assist in the maintenance and development of our databases and Website, to facilitate networking between authorities.  
Recruiter: Education Management Information Exchange (EMIE)

**Information Officer (Law)**

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2501>  
Provide expert reference support to legal researchers at this prestigious Library & assist with content for their Web site.  
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

**Broadcast Media Researcher**

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2504>  
Devise policies and processes for handling both traditional media such as radio and television as well as new media.  
Recruiter: BBC

[The above jobs are paid listings]

Find out more today at <http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

**Free Pint Forthcoming Articles**

\* Trade Mark Databases \* Children and the Internet \* Online Discussion Groups \* Tax law \* Leadership Styles \* Registered Design Databases \* Visual Representation of Information \* Open University Resources \* Making Technologies Accessible \* Trade Mark Databases \* Psychology of Corporations \* Leadership Styles \* U.S. Automotive Industry \*

If you have a suggestion for an article topic or would like to write for Free Pint then please contact [penny@freepint.com](mailto:penny@freepint.com) or sign up for the Author Update at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>.

**FreePint Freedom of Information Exchange**

22nd July 2003, London, UK

This seminar will provide an overview of the Freedom of Information Act. The session will cover: \* practical issues to consider when implementing FOI \* discrepancies between the Data Protection and Freedom of Information regimes \* the role of the publication scheme \* records management issues; handling FOI requests \* right of appeal, complaints procedures & compliance matters \* copyright issues.

<http://www.freepint.com/exchange/fi220703.htm>

**\*\*\*Daily dispatches from the SLA conference, sponsored by Factiva\*\*\***

If you can't be at the Special Libraries Association conference in person, check out the daily dispatches to the FreePint Bar, covering presentations from key SLA divisions and interviews with leading industry figures attending the conference. Find out more about what Factiva is doing in New York at: <http://www.factiva.com/infopro>

**Unstructured Information Management NEW MARKET AND TECHNOLOGY GUIDE**

This report discusses the current software market for Unstructured Information Management products.

It is a tutorial and market guide on how to select a solution suitable for dealing with unstructured textual information. The guide evaluates the current state of the market and recommends which types of systems are most suitable for different tasks.

**ResourceShelf.com -- Daily news and resources for infopros**

ResourceShelf's continuity and growth has been secured with valued support from MuseGlobal. A big "thank you" to them.

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

## MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES from Jane Macoustra

Jane Macoustra is currently working for Clifford Chance in Hong Kong as an Information Officer and she also coordinates library services for the Asian region. She is currently serving as Director of the Asian Chapter of the Special Librarians Association.

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

- The new **HotBot** web site where you can search four engines (Fast, Google, Inktomi and Teoma). This is where I always start when conducting research.
- **Cookin' with Google** is a great place to look for recipes for food and drink. Enter the ingredients that you have got and get back recipes that include them.
- **NASA for Kids** is a fabulous site for children. It has a wealth of information and includes space board games that you print out, make and play on a rainy day.
- **BBC News** is just the thing to keep in touch with British news when you are living and working away from home.
- **LibrarySpot.com** is a good place for all things about Library & Information Services. It is US-biased, but it is very useful because of the number of resources covered.

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

The Bar is by far the most popular part of the FreePint Web site, making up a third of the 25,000 pages viewed daily. To get the most out of it, check out the 'Top 5 Bar Features' posting at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23627>.

Do you ever have a problem with your Web browser? There's been some useful problem solving lately regarding pages being too wide to print <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23770> and getting stuck on Web sites <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23814>.

There have been lots of requests for market data. Can you help with finding information on:

- Wireless telecommunications infrastructure costs in developing regions? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23953>
- Who has the largest retail loyalty card with a smart chip? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23954>
- Companies in the UK which offer remuneration consultancy services? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23988>
- Whether people read e-journals online or print them out? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23918>
- Manufacturers of television remote controls and their market shares? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23868>

More specifically, could you lay your hands on a comparative evaluation of market research providers <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23921> or do you have experience of merging library enquiry points with a call centre <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23926>? All help greatly appreciated.

## FreePint Financials - Companies linked to Directors

Company director reports are now linked directly to individual directors making it quick and easy to research a UK company \*and\* the people running it. <http://www.freepint.com/icc>

## EVENTS

<http://www.freepint.com/events>

### United Kingdom

"Outsourcing: threat or opportunity?" - Organised by CILIP/CorneyCo. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e207> London, 12th June 2003.

"Wired Wessex" - "six companies have come together to demonstrate: Website Optimisation; Flash; Video Conferencing; 3D; Making your website disability friendly and IPIX." <http://www.freepint.com/go/e210> Dorset, 12th June 2003.

"Knowledge Without Frontiers" - 34th BIALL annual study conference on development and devolution within Europe. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e187> Cardiff, 13th - 16th June 2003.

"Electronic Publishing - Present and the Future" - Free event with speaker from IBM & Kate Worlock Director of Information Services, Electronic Publishing Services Ltd. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e217> London, 18th June 2003.

"STN User Days" - Free sessions looking at new features of the STN International service over the past year. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e212> Manchester and London, 24th and 25th June 2003.

"Umbrella 2003" - "aimed at senior managers, members of service teams and those who need to look in on the information scene and find out what's going on". <http://www.freepint.com/go/e191> Manchester, 3rd July 2003.

"Patent Searching Clinics" (Free) - For anyone who needs to search for patent data on the Web. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e214> London, 9th July - 15th October 2003.

### USA

"Leveraging Intelligence for Organizational Effectiveness" - Looking at Sales and Marketing Intelligence, Strategy and Planning Intelligence, Competitive Technical Intelligence. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e186> Virginia, 9th - 14th June 2003.

### Australia

"Power Searching With the Pros" - Two-day workshops, with Mary Ellen Bates and Chris Sherman (both from the US) and Elizabeth Swan. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e215> Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, 30th June - 11th July 2003

Submit details of your event today for free promotion <http://www.freepint.com/events>.

**TIPS ARTICLE**

<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.htm#tips>>

**"Professional Qualifications in Information and Knowledge Management"**

By Jela Webb



Jela is a freelance consultant, lecturer and trainer in information and knowledge management, working with a variety of clients in commercial and academic sectors. She has implemented KM programmes in FTSE 100 companies and, in collaboration, developed 'The Integrated Learning Model' combining traditional training with online learning and knowledge management.

Jela presents at national and international conferences, participates in research and facilitates discussion forums on KM and e-leadership. She has a keen interest in the new economy and in the special field of how best to incentivise and motivate knowledge workers. Jela is the author of the Ashridge Business School Learning Guide to Knowledge Management, a visiting lecturer at the University of Brighton and has been invited to evaluate KM projects for the European Commission.

There has been some recent discussion in FreePint about the skills required in the knowledge economy, which I have read with interest. Of particular relevance is the developing debate about the significance of professional qualifications in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM).

Last year I graduated with an MSc in Information and Knowledge Management, having been part of the first cohort on the programme offered by the London Metropolitan University (formerly University of North London) <<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk>>. When my fellow students and I commenced our studies in September 2000 this was the only programme of its kind on offer in the UK and Europe.

In the light of the discussions and with the assumption that some of you might be thinking about commencing study for a professional qualification, I thought that you might be interested to hear about my experiences of pursuing a professional qualification in IKM.

To set the scene, let me tell you a little about myself. My first introduction to KM was in 1997 whilst researching an MBA dissertation on team working and shortly thereafter I was appointed to the role of Head of KM and Development in the New Learning Organisation, Nat West Group. I was given responsibility for implementing a knowledge management capability in the learning and development function. No mean feat when supporting 60,000 staff with their training and development needs!

Full of enthusiasm in my new job, I was bursting with ideas as to how to implement a KM programme but had questions:

\* Where should I start? \* What should I focus on? \* What have others done? \* What worked - what didn't? \* Were there any good practices I should be following?

I initially did a lot of background reading; the growth in KM-related literature meant that there was no shortage of material to choose from! I attended conferences devoted to the subject, (see <<http://www.ark-group.com>>) participated in seminars and research programmes, as well as building a network of contacts, sharing thoughts and ideas. In a very short space of time I learned a lot, but what I also wanted was something more tangible that would give me a deeper grounding and would help me develop and hone my skills as I built a career in knowledge management.

In mid-1999, I participated in a research programme exploring skills for the knowledge economy and in the process learned about the MSc programme being planned by London Metropolitan University. I enrolled and commenced study in September 2000.

This MSc runs over a two-year academic model of part-time study and is delivered through distance-supported and residential modes, the latter involving seven blocks of formal study run over three/four days, including weekends. The residential sessions see tutors and participants meeting up; these are quite intensive with a typical day starting at 8.30am and lasting approximately 11 hours. During this time, as well as attending formal lectures, we worked in small syndicates, examined problem-based case studies and we undertook group presentations. We were encouraged to engage with key issues in information and knowledge management throughout, and apply theoretical concepts to practice in terms of our own experiences.

The mode of delivery is designed to allow students to combine study with full-time employment. In between the residential sessions, we were supported via Web-based facilities. In practice, we met up between residential sessions to discuss and review assignments; we used bulletin boards, email and chat-rooms to share our experiences, issues and challenges. Participants were almost equally split between the public and private sectors, which provided a rich vein of experiences allowing us all to learn across sectors.

**The Syllabus**

This comprised six compulsory modules as well as a final dissertation. Each module was assessed by course work in a specified format, typically an analytical report, although there were two assessed presentations within the programme.

The modules studied reflected the University's belief that there is a pivotal relationship between the management of information and knowledge; and that to try and manage an intangible asset as knowledge without first underpinning this by appropriate and effective information management strategies was to risk failure.

**Year 1 Semester A**

- Managing Information in the Organisation
- Managing Knowledge

**Year 1 Semester B**

- Information and Knowledge Resources: organisation and management
- Knowledge Applications

**Year 2 Semester A**

- Legal Perspectives on Information and Knowledge Management
- Research and Evaluation Strategies for Information and Knowledge Management

**Related Free Pint links: Year 2 Semester B**

- 'Information and Libraries' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p69>>
  - Post a message to the author, Jela Webb, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
  - Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.htm#feature>>
  - Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>
- Information and Knowledge Management Project (a 12,000 word dissertation)

**Networking**

We established a community of practice early on and have continued to network after completion of our MSc's. One of the advantages of study is the network built up not only with fellow students and lecturers but also with other practitioners and consultants who presented sessions on the programme. These contacts all provided valuable support and will be a career-long networking asset.

**Why study for a professional qualification?**

Knowledge Management is becoming an accepted business discipline and organisations across the industrial sectors are creating roles for knowledge managers. For some individuals, the range of information available from literature, to conferences, to seminars, to industry journals (e.g. <<http://www.knowledge-management.co.uk>> and <<http://www.melcrum.com>>) will be enough, but others will be keen to gain a professional qualification and distinguish themselves from the pack.

Employers seeking to recruit staff into senior information and knowledge management roles accept that knowledge managers come from very diverse backgrounds. A professional qualification equips you with key underpinning skills, and also helps you to be better placed to meet the challenges presented by working in the knowledge economy.

**Reflections on the programme**

Has the programme been worth it? For me, it has been a valuable experience. I am now working as a consultant, lecturer and trainer in IKM and being able to add this qualification to my CV helps to establish my credentials with potential clients. Having firstly obtained the practical experience, I have now supplemented this by a formal academic qualification, which has made me even better equipped to offer my clients professional expertise and knowledge of the subject.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a professional qualification in KM is of value. KM is a developing discipline and there is no set career path. Knowledge Managers have different aspects to their role depending upon their own organisational structures. By building on the foundations of practical work experience, a professional qualification enables an individual to make the transition to a higher level of awareness in this evolving discipline.

In the knowledge economy, many organisations are keen to demonstrate that they are knowledge-centric. This is in turn giving knowledge managers a high profile and those who can demonstrate both practical and theoretical awareness will be the ones best placed to succeed in their chosen KM career.

**GOLD**

In 2002, Jane Taylor looked at health, education, manufacturing and banking trade union sites plus a whole lot more. Nick Mackenzie covered new technologies of the mobile phone in his feature.

- FreePint No.113 30th May 2002. "Trade Unions on the Net" and "The Future of Mobile Telephony" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/300502.htm>

In 2001, Helen Rendell wrote a tips article on waste management Websites and Ian Watson identified some sites to help you find image information on the Web.

- FreePint No.88, 24th May 2001. "Waste on the WWW" and "Images on the Web" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/240501.htm>

Three years ago Stuart Cliffe told us how his company gained media coverage without spending millions. Stuart Campbell explained all about eXtensible Markup Language (XML).

- FreePint No.63, 25th May 2000. "Maximising Press and PR Exposure via the Internet" and "XML : Perception to Practice" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/250500.htm>

In FreePint No.39, Emma Thompson's tips article looked at language resources and Micky Allen covered Central and Eastern European sources.

- FreePint No.39, 27th May 1999. "Lingo on-line - Languages resources on the World Wide Web" and "Central and Eastern European Web Sources" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/270599.htm>

Five years ago Dr. Pita Enriquez Harris discussed 'Bots' and Geoff Ford looked at food industry sites.

- FreePint No.15, 28th May 1998. "Web Slavery - Automating Information Retrieval" and "Food Industry Information on the Web" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/280598.htm>





As Business Development Director of Imark Communications' Information Portfolio, Katherine Allen has responsibility for Online Information, the world's no. 1 event for information content, management and delivery, attracting an international audience of over 11, 000 visitors and over 280 exhibitors. Running alongside the exhibition, the Online Information conference addresses key issues and challenges facing information professionals, librarians, knowledge managers and publishers worldwide. New at Online Information for 2003 is the launch of Content Management Europe, the definitive European event for purchasers and vendors of enterprise content management and the International Information Industry Awards.

#### Related links:

- Find out more about this book online at <<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/teaching.htm>>
- Buy this book at [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)
- "E-learning and Teaching in Library and Information Services". ISBN 1856044394, published by Facet Publishing, written by Barbara Allan

## FREE PINT BOOKSHELF

<<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>>

### "E-learning and Teaching in Library and Information Services"

Written by Barbara Allan

Reviewed by Katherine Allen

E-learning offers a range of opportunities to library and information professionals. These include providing new services and resources, enhancing the role of the information centre within the organisation, and career development.

Barbara Allan provides an overview of this rapidly developing field. The book will be particularly useful for info pros who are interested in getting into e-learning -- perhaps in developing an e-learning initiative from scratch -- and need an introduction to the topic. It is divided into three sections: (1) tools and technologies, (2) e-learning and teaching, and (3) e-learning and the LIS profession. Case studies and examples are provided throughout to illustrate the real-life application of concepts.

Allan makes clear that e-learning is not just about acquiring expensive software products. Virtual communication tools, including e-mail, mailing lists, newsgroups, and instant messaging also have a part to play. The opening case study examines the use of e-mail to deliver training - a cheap, cost-effective method that will have many info pros thinking 'I could do that!'

For those with bigger budgets or more ambitious projects, Allan also considers integrated learning environments, including learning portals, virtual learning environments (Web-based toolkits which facilitate learning) and managed learning environments (like a VLE but incorporating institutional processes such as record-keeping). Info pros in non-academic environments may find these solutions too expensive and complex for their needs, but Allan does suggest alternative approaches either involving commercial communications software (such as Lotus Notes) or low-cost or free collaboration tools. CDE Software Evaluation <<http://cde.athabasca.ca/softeval/R.htm>>

assesses collaborative software tools and gives priority to software which can be downloaded for free.

Any e-learning project will need course materials as well as a technology infrastructure, and Allan devotes a chapter to the evaluation and use of Web-based training materials. Examples of Websites developed by libraries showcase approaches to delivering e-learning initiatives, such as improving study skills or user instruction. Perhaps not surprisingly, the examples are almost entirely drawn from the public sector, so info pros based in the private sector will need to think laterally to adapt the ideas to their own environment.

The two most useful chapters, from a practical point of view, look at the design of e-learning programmes and activities. These take the reader through the design and development process from needs analysis to evaluation. There are plenty of checklists and examples - and perhaps most importantly, case studies providing examples of e-learning activities in action. This is like eavesdropping on an e-learning programme as it takes place and provides plenty of pointers for developing the tutor's tone and style - the 'online voice' - highlighting issues which might emerge from the e-tutoring process, such as managing student participation and interaction, and even handling online bullying.

Allan's book covers a lot of ground, and as a consequence skims over some areas. For some readers, the quantity and range of material may appear to be a bit daunting. However, if you are interested in getting into e-learning this is a good place to start. It will give you an overview of key issues, which you can then explore further using the comprehensive list of resources provided.

## FREE PINT

### Contributors to this issue:

William Hann (FreePint Managing Editor), Penny (FreePint Administrator), Annabel Colley (FreePint Relations), Stephen Lee, Jela Webb, Jane Macoustra, Katherine Allen, Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proof reading).

### Advertisers/Sponsors of this issue:

EMIE, National University of Ireland, Glen Recruitment, Factiva, Sue Hill Recruitment, BBC, Willco, ResourceShelf.com, InfoSphere.

**Managing Editor** William Hann BSc(Hons) MCLIP  
[william@freepint.com](mailto:william@freepint.com)

© Free Pint Limited 1997-2003  
<<http://www.freepint.com/>>

**WEB:** [www.freepint.com](http://www.freepint.com)

**EMAIL:** [info@freepint.com](mailto:info@freepint.com)

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** [subs@freepint.com](mailto:subs@freepint.com)

**AUTHORS:** [www.freepint.com/author.tm](http://www.freepint.com/author.tm)

**ADVERTISERS:** [www.freepint.com/advert.htm](http://www.freepint.com/advert.htm)

**ISBN:** 1460-7239

### Free Pint Limited

4-6 Station Approach  
Ashford, Middlesex  
TW15 2QN, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044  
Fax: +44 (0)1784 420033

Technology by Willco  
<<http://www.willco.com/>>

## FEATURE ARTICLE

**"Writing for the Web - How to Write Web-Friendly Content for your Site"**  
By Steve Lee

Steve Lee is Website Manager for <http://www.tradepartners.gov.uk>. Trade Partners UK is part of British Trade International, the Government body responsible for fostering business competitiveness through international trade and investment.

Prior to taking up his present post, he held a range of information management posts in British Trade International, including information researcher, database manager and Information Manager for British Trade International's Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme.

A key element in the success (or otherwise) of any Website is the information it provides. If you want your site to stand out from the Internet crowd, you need to provide the most Web-friendly content you can. And given the volumes of text on the Web, making sure that what you write is Web friendly is obviously important.

Increasingly, it is accepted that writing for the Web is different to writing for other media. Information seekers approach Websites and the information they provide differently to the way in which they approach alternative information sources. If information providers are serious about using the Web, they need to be aware of, and address, this difference. It's all too easy to get excited by Internet technology, but you should never forget that the technology is only a means to an end - the supply of information to information seekers.

This article provides a short introduction to the basics of writing for the Web. It considers how Web users approach the information they find on the net, and, based on this, offers some practical tips to help you produce Web friendly content for your site. It does not seek to dictate a specific style, and cannot take account of any style or other guides available to you; these should be read in conjunction with the advice below.

**How do information seekers approach the Web?**

Information seekers are often uncertain about, and critical of, the sites they find when navigating the Web. Think how little it can take in practice to raise doubts in your own mind about the credibility or reliability of any given site. Hard to follow or out-of-date information, or links that don't work, will inevitably colour your impressions, no matter how much other valuable, up to date and accurate content is available.

Remember:

- The great majority of information seekers scan Web pages, rather than reading every word. They look for particular terms or phrases, and only if they spot them will they stop scanning and start reading.
- Information seekers generally want a specific piece of information, and they want to find it quickly and easily.
- The Web is user-driven. If someone using a Website is unable to find what they are looking for quickly and easily, they can (and will) click on, without delay.
- Your information is competing with hundreds of millions of other pages for a user's attention. The information you provide on each page needs to sell your site quickly as users may well chance across it (i.e. via a search engine), without knowing anything else about you or your site.
- Jargon, ambiguous or unclear content can confuse users as they try to get at the facts. This slows them down and distracts them, and

may cause them to question the reliability of other information from the same source.

- Reading from computer screens is hard on the eyes. People don't want to read pages and pages of text to find the specific piece of information they want. In any case, usability research estimates that the majority of people read some 25% slower from Web pages than from printed publications.

**Writing for the Web**

So what can you do to write content which is as Web-friendly as possible?

First, don't jump straight in and start writing. Stop for a minute.

Think:

- Who are you writing for? Who is your target audience? Remember to write with their needs in mind, and to use the appropriate language and terminology.
- What are you trying to say? Think about the best way to structure and present your information - before you start writing, not during, or after.

Once you are clear about these points, you are ready to actually begin writing. Research into Website usability tells us that information seekers find concise, scannable, objective text most useful, so this is what you should always try to provide.

**Concise Text**

Reading from a Web page is slower than reading from the equivalent page of printed text. Authors should aim for approximately half the word count of print when preparing content for a Website, to make the Web text as accessible as possible for visitors to the site.

How do you do it?

- Eliminate introductory text - what you skip through to get to the facts. Avoid starting sentences with passive phrases (i.e. It has been noted that...).
- Try to get to the point quickly (think journalism, not formal minutes or reports). Use short, simple words and sentences (i.e. 'use', not 'utilise', 'we think', not 'it is envisaged'). Use words your audience will understand, and avoid ambiguities, but don't insult their intelligence.
- Don't reinvent the wheel - if information is available elsewhere on your site, don't duplicate it, just link to it.

**Scannable Text**

Visitors to Websites tend to scan the content, looking for key words or phrases of interest, rather than reading all available content. If they don't quickly find what they're looking for while scanning a particular Web page, they will soon

**Related Free Pint links:**

- <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk>> - writing agency with tips and strong views about business and online writing
- 'Internet Webmaster' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p183>>
- Post a message to the author, Steve Lee, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/050603.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

look elsewhere. To assist scanning, authors should try to break up their text as much as possible.

How do you do it?

- Put the key sentence, point or idea at the start of each paragraph. If users are interested, they can read more; if not, they haven't wasted time reading the whole thing.
- Only include one idea per paragraph - your visitor will skip over any later points as they scan the text. Use lots of short paragraphs, with one idea or point in each.
- Use clear, not clever, sub-headings.
- Use bullet points or numbered lists rather than lengthy paragraphs of text.
- Use highlighted text (i.e. bold or italic, not underlined, to avoid confusion with links) to draw attention to key words or phrases.
- Avoid using click here as a link. It draws the eye to functionality and away from information.

**Objective Language**

All text should be written in a direct and conversational tone; plain English should be used throughout.

Authors should always avoid jargon, subjectivity or exaggeration. Users will quickly spot it, and it will influence their perception not only of the content concerned, but of other information on the same site, no matter how much effort has gone into its preparation.

**Don't Forget:**

Before making any changes to your site

The process of writing Web-friendly text doesn't end when you finish your first draft. Remember to ask someone else to proof-read your newly written text - before it's added to the site! Whether this is possible or not, listen to the words you've written. Read them out loud, or say them to yourself. If they sound wrong, or clumsy, they probably are. Throughout your site, try to be consistent. Many matters of style aren't absolute matters of right or wrong - but chopping and changing can make your site look unprofessional.

**Once you have updated your site**

Remember to check your pages regularly - situations may change, and information becomes outdated very quickly. Try and make it part of your regular routine to check any content you have written, and update it as necessary.

**And Finally ...**

As this article shows, effective writing for the Web is not an impossible skill to learn, or somehow the preserve of experts. It does demand some thought and practice, but provided you are able to take a little time, will pay

**Advertise with FreePint**

If you'd like your message to reach the largest community of information users and purchasers then advertise with FreePint:

<<http://www.freepint.com/advert.htm>>

dividends. Remember, there isn't one right way to write for the Web - but using the ideas above to help prepare and present your content will go a long way to help to make your site Web friendly for visitors.

**Useful Resources**

By no means an exhaustive list, but you may find the following sites useful:

<http://www.useit.com> - Jakob Nielsen's site for all things relating to usability, including writing for the Web.

<http://www.sun.com/980713/Webwriting/> - Sun Microsystem's useful guide to Web writing.

<http://www.leafdigital.com/class/lessons/writing/> - a helpful short guide to writing for the Web.

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk> - the Website of the Plain English Campaign, including a series of useful guides to writing in specific situations, and an A-Z of alternative words.

Free Pint Limited © 1997-2003

To subscribe, unsubscribe, change your subscriptions or password, visit <<http://www.freepint.com/member>> or email <[subs@freepint.com](mailto:subs@freepint.com)>. For details about contributing, advertising or to see past issues, please visit the Web site at <<http://www.freepint.com/>> or email <[info@freepint.com](mailto:info@freepint.com)>.

Please note: Free Pint (ISSN 1460-7239) is a registered trademark of, and published by, Free Pint Limited. The publishers will NEVER make the subscriber list available to any other company or organisation.

The opinions, advice, products and services offered herein are the sole responsibility of the contributors. Whilst all reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the publication, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

This publication may be freely copied and/or distributed in its entirety. However, individual sections MAY NOT be copied and/or distributed without the prior written agreement of the publishers. Write to William Hann <[william@freepint.com](mailto:william@freepint.com)> for more details. Product names used in Free Pint are for identification purposes only, and may be trademarks of their respective owners. Free Pint disclaims any and all rights in those marks. All rights reserved.