

# Meeting Report: 'Keeping Good Company': Quality Business Information on the Web

**Session created and facilitated by Karen Blakeman**

**8 September 2011**

This was a packed and stimulating workshop. Karen Blackman guided us through an overview of business resources on the Web during a one-day training session hosted by the University of the West of England. The programme formed a comprehensive account of online resources, with coverage that included finding company information, industry data, market research, statistical data and how to make the best use of social media and professional networks.

The format for the day was a combination of tips and practice. Karen gave plenty of opportunity for questions, discussion and experience sharing. There was content that would help to focus attendees' minds and boost confidence when dealing with familiar scenarios. There were, for example, starting points for helping a prospective employee doing his or her 'homework' on a company and its market as interview preparation. Another useful tip was how to find out who maintains a website if you are unsure as to its reliability. There was ample time available to explore with hands-on exercises, which would

help to optimise future online searching skills for business resources. A question that involved finding a survey about which country makes the best chocolate proved to be particularly popular.

It became clear that developing an understanding of the limitations to business-information seeking is also important. Obviously not everything is available for free! This may be because private companies do not make their information freely available to potential competitors, because the cost of market reports are often prohibitively expensive for hard-pressed budgets or simply because no one has ever thought it necessary to gather, collate and maintain the relevant specialist data. Researchers need to be aware of such constraints and to ensure that the data they are going to analyse is readily available to them before they embark upon their research projects.

There were useful tips on identifying and making the best use of the feast of online resources

presented that benefited both those with long experience and those who (like me) are new to business information. It was also a welcome chance for attendees to meet other librarians and information professionals working in this area. At the conclusion of the training session participants were invited to contribute to a fantasy football league of favourite resources.

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