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Virtual Teams: Benefits & Challenges

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I recently updated all of my 'success factors' briefing papers for the [UKeiG web site](#) and this year added one on virtual team management. Although the current language of business speaks of 'collaboration' it does not speak of 'virtual collaboration' but of virtual teams. This is useful because not all teams work in a collaborative way with a common cause. A team can be defined as a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, and who manage their relationship across organisational boundaries. A team therefore has a unity of purpose, a social structure, and its members share a common responsibility for outcomes which is not necessarily a common cause.

Probably the most comprehensive survey of virtual team adoption currently available was undertaken by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) in late 2009.

The main reasons quoted in the report for establishing virtual teams were

- Improve collaboration with other business units
- Tap into a larger pool of expertise
- Improve competitiveness through a faster response to opportunities
- Cost reduction, especially travel costs and the need for internal meeting spaces
- Improve collaboration with customers, suppliers and partners

The challenges of working in virtual teams were seen as

- Misunderstandings due to differences in culture, language and an inability to read people's expressions
- Difficulty in leading teams remotely
- Difficulty in building camaraderie and trust
- Difficulty in managing the productivity of virtual teams
- Managing information overload

Building a virtual team takes a lot of care and effort. The considerations of language, location, time and culture have to be taken into account in not only the selection of the staff concerned but also in setting up and managing each meeting. There may be potentially a key member of the virtual team who does not have good spoken language skills and it may be necessary to bring in an interpreter who themselves may not have the security clearance to be participating in the meeting.

Adding someone to the team may be required but removing someone could be very difficult. In a physical meeting situation a quiet word to a manager may be effective but in a virtual team that call has to be made by 'phone, and the person who is asked to leave may feel that not enough has been done to enable them to contribute to the meeting. The newcomer may also change the dynamics and levels of trust in the team.

The word TEAM provides a useful mnemonic for virtual teams

- Trust between members of the team, and that their work is worthwhile, is essential. Once broken it cannot be rebuilt
- Engagement is very difficult to achieve in a virtual team and so has to be worked on in a step-by-step approach recognising that each member of the team is an individual
- Achievement, both personal and as a team, should be recognised and used to build engagement and trust
- Membership needs to be kept under continuous review, as just one person that fails to achieve and/or fails to engage and/or fails to understand the importance of trust will have a major impact on every other member

Culture, time and place

Virtual teams have three dimensions to their operation

- National and organisational culture (which includes language)
- Time
- Location

These need to be taken into account at all times in the planning, execution and review of a virtual meeting. A simple '3D' graphic pinned to a desktop can be a valuable mnemonic.

Most multi-national companies adopt English as a corporate language for corporate communications, but certainly companies outside of the USA are made aware every day that this is a guideline and not a command. This is especially the case in Europe where it is difficult to travel more than 500 miles from a city centre without entering a country with a different language.

In meetings with attendees from different countries it is often easier for them to understand English spoken as a second (or even third) language than English spoken by a native speaker because of the use of idioms and inadvertently complex sentence constructions. An important point that is often overlooked is that native speakers of English need to allow time between sentences to give others a chance to 'translate' concepts (rather than words) into their own language.

When planning virtual team meetings it is important to understand that there are four elements of language skills

- The ability to speak
- The ability to understand what is being said
- The ability to write
- The ability to read

Individual team members may have different levels of skill in each of these four areas, and making an assumption to the contrary could lead to major problems with understanding and with decision making.

The concept of location is also complex. Members of the virtual team could be in different floors of the same building, in different buildings, in different countries and of course not even in a building at all but on a train, plane or in a hotel dining room. With audio or Skype video conferences it might not be at all obvious where the attendees are actually sitting. The location may have an impact on ambient noise levels, on whether the attendee can be overheard by colleagues or strangers, and on whether it is possible for the attendee to write notes of the meeting. This mobile location component is increasingly important as mobile technology enables people to be away from their offices on a more extended basis.

Even a small company operating on a regional basis may want to include one or more of its employees with others in a virtual meeting. It is important to understand that even having one person 'phoning in to what otherwise would be a regular physical meeting will change the dynamics of the meeting. This is especially the case when the person leading the meeting tries to do so from a remote location, or even on vacation. This is because another aspect of location is the distribution effect. If the majority of the participants are in one location then they will be a dominant force in the discussion, especially if the leader of the meeting is also present at that location. They will also have the benefit of being able to see the body language of their colleagues and to time their contributions to the discussion.

Just some of the challenges of time in virtual meetings include different times to start and end the working day and public holidays being taken on different days (even in the UK!). We all want to manage our own diaries and feel uncomfortable when someone calls a meeting at an unsuitable time without prior consultation. Even if we can actually participate in the meeting we may do so in a less-than-constructive way. Even a small change in time, say from 09.00 to 08.30 could be very difficult for people commuting by public transport to accommodate easily.

Training requirements

In view of the increasing importance of virtual teams companies should be providing training in how to manage virtual teams but very few do so. Team leaders in particular will need to gain some additional skills.

These include

- Understanding the skills and experience that team members need to have to be effective members of a virtual team
- Maintaining close working relationships with the managers of team members to ensure they are aware of the organisation and office environment in which team members are operating
- Taking additional time to prepare for a meeting so that for example all team members have the documents they need several days in advance
- Being adept at using conferencing and social media applications to help the team achieve objectives
- Being able to motivate team members that they have not met, and may not have chosen to be a member of the team
- Being ready to call team members by name to contribute, remembering which team members may not have spoken for a period of time
- Accepting that it is very difficult to concentrate on leading a virtual team meeting and make notes of the discussions and actions

A team leader who is excellent in managing physical meetings may not be equally as proficient when managing virtual team meetings. If leading or even participating in virtual teams is a core activity then their performance should be included in annual performance appraisals.

Some companies have built a certification process into virtual team participation so that employees (and managers) initially build up expertise in single country/same time zone virtual meetings and then progress to managing complex multi-national, multi-cultural teams in due course.

Recommendations

My ten recommendations for getting the best out of virtual teams and virtual team meetings are

1. Recognise that virtual teams are going to be increasingly important to any organisation, and ensure that current and potential participants have access to training and mentoring on virtual team management and virtual team meetings.
2. Virtual teams should have very clear objectives so that it is possible to set the investment in the team against the outcome and also that team members bring appropriate skills, expertise and authority to take action.
3. Leadership skills that work for physical teams may not be as valuable in a virtual team environment. Other skills are needed and have to be acquired through practice, not just through reading or teaching.
4. Without good team meetings a virtual team is very unlikely to achieve its objectives and so particular care should be taken in developing guidelines for virtual meetings and for facilitating feedback.
5. Develop good profiles of each team member, taking into account local availability of technology and offices, which can be used to take part in virtual meetings (especially in the case of open-plan offices) and language expertise.

6. Ideally each team should have an opportunity to meet with other members of the team at the outset of the team being set up. Where this is not possible there should be an initial virtual meeting where team members can introduce themselves and gain experience with the technology being used before the first formal meeting of the team.
7. Team dynamics of virtual teams can be quite fragile, often depending on a very high level of trust in people they may not have met before. Introducing a new team member into an existing team may mean starting the process of building trust all over again.
8. Social media applications can be of value in supporting virtual teams but may need to be tailored to specific team requirements.
9. Issues of language and culture need careful consideration but should never be an excuse not to bring specific individuals into a team.
10. Every member of a virtual team should feel that they have gained from their participation the experience that is useful to their local situation and their personal career development.

Anything but Google: Top Tips

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The Google alternatives workshop is a regular on the UKeiG training calendar. We don't guarantee that you will be weaned off Google by the end of the day but we do try and highlight other search engines and tools that might be better for certain types of information. At the end of the workshops the participants pull together a list of Top Tips. These could be a tool or website they have just discovered, a search command, or a general approach or strategy to searching. The tips below are a combined list from two workshops attended by people from all sectors and types of company, and even included a couple of self-employed researchers. The sessions covered both general search tools and specialist services, and the Top Tips is an interesting mix of strategy and specific sites. But first a few comments about Bing.

Try Bing

A question I always ask at the start of the workshop is "Does anyone use Bing?" There are often a couple of nods from the group but then someone will say, "But I only use it by accident because it is the default search option in the browser." Several will say that they "don't like it" but find it difficult to explain why. After some thought and discussion the reasons put forward tend to be that Bing does not offer such a wide range of types of information on the results page as Google does, and that it seems to be more consumer rather than "research" focused.

It is a mistake to dismiss Bing altogether because it does sometimes come up with documents that Google has not indexed, or which Google buries at the bottom of its results. You do, though, need to use Bing's advanced search commands to get the best out of it. (There is no advanced search screen) and some of these are the same as Google's. There is a summary and comparison chart on my web site at <http://www.rba.co.uk/search/compare.shtml> and the full list of Bing's commands can be found at <http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ff795620.aspx>

To see if Bing really is so poor at search have a go at Bingiton (<http://www.bingiton.com/>). This is a tool from Bing that lets you compare Bing and Google results side by side and decide which set is best. (Note that Bingiton is only available in the US and the UK). You run a search and Bingiton presents you with anonymised results. You choose which set is the best or "I can't decide, it's a draw." After you have run five searches Bing tells you which search engine came out on top.

The feedback from people who tried Bingiton during the workshops is that Bing comes out on top for a few very specific types of search:

- Tourist attractions and holiday destinations

- Shopping
- People search. Bing came up with a better selection of profiles from social and professional networks
- Spare parts for a classic car. An unusual search and so specific (we even had the part numbers) that we were surprised how badly Google seriously lost the plot on this one. Bing won every time

Top Tips

1. Get to know the advanced search commands and options

Google is not the only search tool that uses them and they can help focus your search, especially when using general search tools such as Bing.

2. If you are conducting serious research don't stop with the first few reasonable looking results

Information of dubious quality can infiltrate even the most well respected of specialist websites. Put on your "sceptical goggles" as one delegate said! There are plenty of alternative tools and resources out there so get some corroboration before acting on the information you find.

3. Allocate time for your search

If you are carrying out in-depth research don't leave it to the last minute. You will probably need to tweak your strategy and try different search tools to ensure that you are retrieving the best information. It sometimes takes longer than you anticipate.

4. Plan your strategy

Think about the type of search you want to conduct and the type of information you are looking for. For example, if you are carrying out a systematic review and want to use Boolean operators forget about Google; head for Bing instead. And if you need official statistics or company information go straight to specialist sites that provide that data.

5. Country versions of search tools

Many search tools offer country versions that give priority to the country's local content, although that might be in the local language. This is a useful strategy when searching for industries, companies and people that are active in a particular country.

6. DuckDuckGo <http://www.duckduckgo.com/>

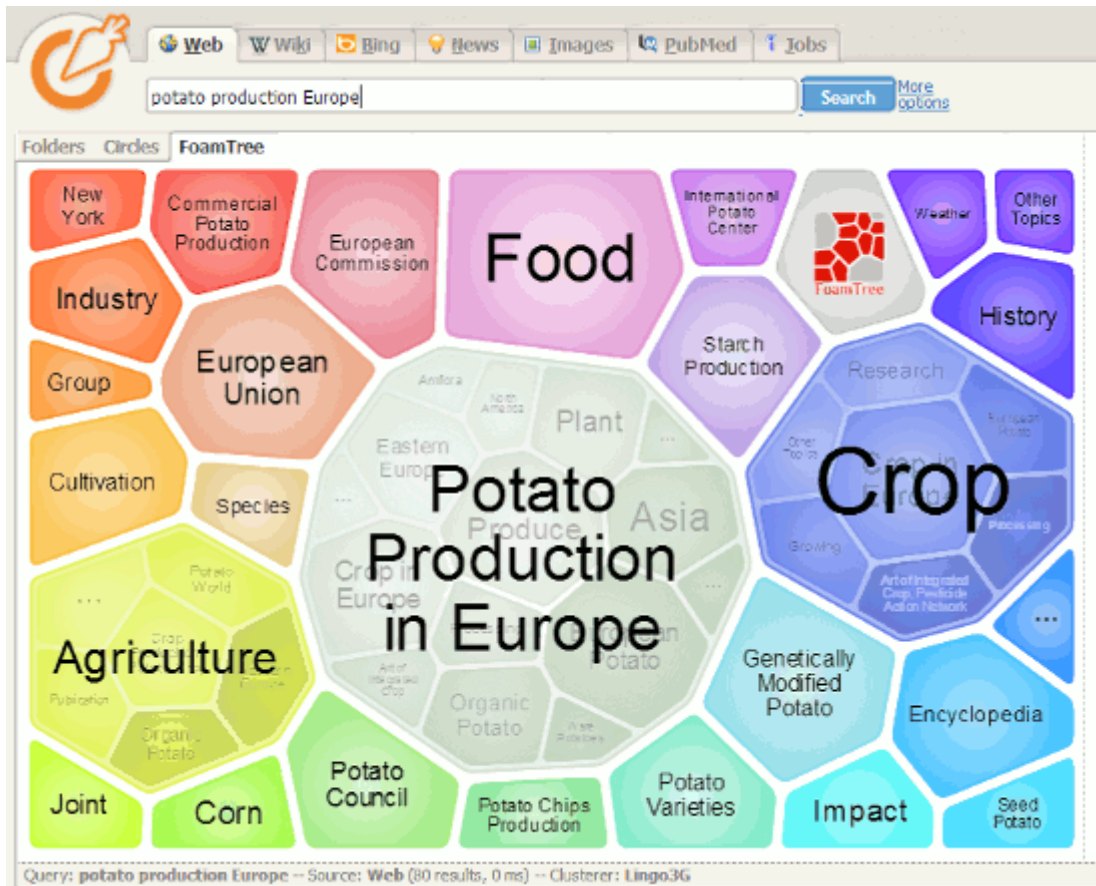
This was recommended for its clean, straightforward layout and the range of resources it offers on a topic. A school librarian commented that the pupils at her school loved it. The interface was recently given a makeover so if haven't used it for a while give it another go.

7. MillionShort <http://www.millionshort.com/>

If you are fed up with seeing the same results from Google again and again try MillionShort. MillionShort enables you to remove the most popular web sites from the results. Originally, as its name suggests, it removed the top 1 million but you can change the number that you want omitted. The page that best answers your question might not

be well optimised for search engines or might cover a topic that is so “niche” that it never makes it into the top results in Google or Bing.

8. Carrot Search <http://carrotsearch.com/>



Carrot Search foam tree

This was recommended for its clustering of results and also the visualisations of terms and concepts via the circles and “foam tree”. There is a link to the live web demo on the left hand side of the home page. The direct link is <http://search.carrot2.org/stable/search>

9. Microsoft Academic Search - charts <http://academic.research.microsoft.com/>

This is a direct competitor to Google Scholar. The site can be slow to load and it sometimes assigns authors to the wrong institution. Nevertheless, the visualisations such as the co-author and citation maps can be useful in identifying who else is working in a particular area of research. The visualisations can be accessed by clicking on the Citation Graph image to the left of the search results or an author profile.

10. Creative Commons and public domain images

Use the Bing license option (US version only) to search for images with creative commons or public domain licenses, but do go to the original webpage and check that the license is indeed associated with the image you want to use. Alternatively use one of the following:

Flickr Creative Commons <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>

<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>

Flickr The Commons <https://www.flickr.com/commons>

Wikimedia Commons <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

MorgueFile.com <http://www.morguefile.com/>

Geograph <http://www.geograph.org.uk/>

Nasa <http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/>

11. Tineye Multicolr <http://labs.tineye.com/multicolr/>

Search “20 million Creative commons Flickr images by colour.” You can choose up to five colours and move the dividing bar between them to increase/decrease their prominence within the image. Click through to the original Flickr image to double check the license.

12. Company Check <http://www.companycheck.co.uk/>

Company Check is one of many websites that repackage Companies House data. It provides 5 years of accounts, and graphs for some financials free of charge. It also lists the directors of a company. Click on a director’s name and you can view other current and past directorships for that person. It provides more free information than Companies House but you have to register (free) to gain full access. Additional information such as credit risk, CCJs, credit reports, and many Companies House documents are priced or available as part of a subscription.

13. Guardian Data Store <http://www.theguardian.com/data>

Excellent for datasets and visualisations relating to stories currently in the news. As well as the graphs and interactive maps the source of the data is always given and there are links to the original datasets that are used in the articles.

14. Zanran <http://zanran.com/>

This is a search tool for searching information contained in charts, graphs and tables of data and within formatted documents such as PDFs, Excel spreadsheets and images. Enter your search terms and optionally limit your search by date and/or format type. One delegate said, “It has changed my life!” (We think/hope she meant her working life.)

15. Keep up to date

Keep up to date with what the search engines are up to, changes to key resources and new sites. Identify blogs and commentators that are relevant to your research interests and subject areas, and follow them using RSS or email alerts.

The following blogs and newsletters provide news on what the search engines are up to. The first three are aimed at search engine optimisation but are very quick in identifying changes in the way the major search engines work.

Search Engine Land <http://searchengineland.com/>

Search Engine Watch <http://searchenginewatch.com/>

Search Engine Roundtable <http://www.seroundtable.com/>

Karen Blakeman’s Blog <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/>

Phil Bradley’s weblog <http://philbradley.typepad.com/>

I want to - Phil Bradley http://www.philbradley.typepad.com/i_want_to/

SCONUL Summer Conference & AGM 2014

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On the 26th of June, thanks to a generous UKeiG grant, I was able to attend one day of the SCONUL Summer Conference taking place in Glasgow. The theme of the conference was The Open Library: Collections, Collaborations and Challenges, a very topical and sometimes controversial topic in library and publishing circles at the moment.

Before the conference began, Alison Stevenson from the Glasgow School of Art Library was given a few minutes to talk about the tragic event that has befallen the Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh building and to highlight the Mackintosh Library wants list, currently available online at <http://lib.gsa.ac.uk/update-on-fire-affected-library-services/>, to help replace some of its priority collections.

The conference started on an international note with Laine Farley from the California Digital Library talking about the challenges of managing print and digital collections across a consortium of academic libraries spanning a whole state. This was followed by a talk by Anja Smit from the Utrecht University Library, who explained how having been sharing their catalogue on a national level for some time now, Dutch libraries are now looking into making it available on an international level using WorldCat. The California Digital Library case was interesting as many libraries already have experience of working in consortia to manage their digital subscriptions, but the CDL are also trying to apply the same processes to managing their monograph and print collections, an experiment worth keeping an eye on. The Dutch libraries talk was also interesting, particularly when it comes to managing inter-library loans, which they currently run as an unmediated service nationally, where customers simply create an online account and manage their loans on a pay as you go basis. Even more interesting is the idea that the Dutch Libraries are hoping to extend that service on an international level once their catalogue is transferred over to WorldCat.

Following on from these opening speakers, the rest of the conference was very much focused on the issue of Open Access. The keynote speaker, Mark Thorley, chair of the RCUK Research Outputs Network, made some controversial statements, calling on all librarians to become the guardians and champions of open access. This statement received mixed responses as many in the room felt that there are contradictory messages coming from RCUK: on the one hand open access is now a mandatory component of accessing research funding, but then it is evaluated against REF standards that continue to favour publication in reputable academic journals that don't operate an open access mandate.

Throughout the conference, the issue of Gold versus Green OA models was ever-present. There was a collective sense that although everyone agrees with the principles of open access, there's still a lot of work to be done, not least in terms of figuring out the right incentives for researchers and the right business models for universities and publishers.

As an early career professional, attending this conference has been a great opportunity for me to learn more about the background and future directions of open access publishing from a library perspective. It was also very interesting to think about the rising demand for published open data in research as well as published outcomes and the ensuing challenges this will bring in the humanities field where I currently work.

Online

Joy Cadwallader, Aberystwyth University (Aberystwyth Online User Group). Please send your submissions for the next edition to jrc@aber.ac.uk

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

£4.6 million pounds has been shared between [21 research projects](#) “addressing the challenges of working with big data and making the information more accessible and easier to interpret by a lay audience”. The Digital Transformations in the Arts and Humanities funding has been announced by David Willetts MP, and recipients include *Big Data for Law* (John Sheridan, National Archives) and *Lost Visions: retrieving the visual element of printed books from the nineteenth century* (Professor Julia Thomas, Cardiff University). The funding from the AHRC’s Big Data Research strand is also supported by the Economic & Social Research Council.

Meanwhile [a £450,000 research grant has become available](#) for a collaborative proposal to, “explore the future of academic books in the context of open access publishing and continuing digital change” starting in October. The AHRC will fund *The Academic Future of the Book* project, Ann Jarvis - University of Cambridge Librarian - will chair and the AHRC and British Library will direct. The work is intended to complement the [HEFCE-led research](#) into monographs and open access publishing.

British Library

Up to 60 staff working for the UK MOOC provider [FutureLearn](#) are moving into the British Library at St Pancras following a, “commercial leasing agreement.” As an existing partner of FutureLearn the British Library are already working with Futurelearn on their MOOC development.

BUFVC/JISC

HE/FE subscribers to [BoB National](#) (BUFVC/JISC) are finding more than a million off-air TV and radio programmes available to them online. Following an [announcement](#) on February 3rd 2014, BBC TV and radio content now dates back to 2007. Ten foreign language channels are also available, as are searchable transcripts, one-click citations and Apple iOS compatibility.

Getty Publications

In January Getty Publications launched their new [Virtual Library](#) of more than 250 books from 1966 through to 2013. Titles from their back catalogue will continue to be added and sources for the collection include the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Conservation Institute and the Getty Research Institute. The collection includes art history research, exhibition catalogues and other publications on the visual arts. I have just taken a look at *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* Thomas Kren & Scot McKendrick (eds) 2013 and the Read Online option opens in Google Books. You can also download to PDF and there is bibliographic information from a WorldCat link.

Internet Archive

After the launch of their [Historical Software Archive](#) last year, the US-based [Internet Archive](#) have followed up with a [Console Living Room](#) where you can play a range of 70s and 80s console games online using the JSMESS emulator system. Click on one of the six consoles listed to see the games available. Back in the day I must have been reading instead of playing with these but I notice that the Astrocade console was designed by Midway, the videogame division of Bally who once made old school pinball tables.

Trinity College Dublin

In a partnership between Trinity College Dublin and Google Maps, a collection of 10,000 maps collected by the Fagel family of Amsterdam between 1630 and 1800 will be digitised and become freely available online. This [press release](#) describes how the high quality, well-preserved special collection at Trinity College Library includes street plans, battle plans and maps for sea navigation, focussing on, “where the Dutch had trading or colonial interests or areas of recent discovery.” The online resource resulting from the digitisation project will benefit from an image gallery, time selection and some 3D modelling.

Wellcome Library

More than 100,000 hi-res images sourced from the Wellcome Library historical holdings have been made available under the Creative Commons-Attribution only (CC-BY) licence. The [Wellcome Images press release](#) describes some snippets of content: a 3000-year-old Egyptian prescription on papyrus, illuminated medieval manuscripts, etchings by Van Gogh and Goya, Gillray satires and John Thomsons’ portrait photos from his travels in China in the nineteenth century. Galleries on the home page currently highlight AIDS posters, Olympic sports and tattoo designs. A “Download hi-res image” button is available for each image. I concur with Simon Chaplin, Head of the Wellcome Library, “... the collection amounts to a dizzying visual record of human culture.”

British Pathé

British Pathé have published their whole film archive to their [YouTube channel](#) in partnership with German firm MediaKraft. The archive comprises over 85,000 newsreel films made between 1896 and 1976 in the UK and around the world, “a dominant feature of the British cinema experience.” A quick scan of the channel finds this rare and quaint press [interview](#) with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy arriving in Southampton dock in 1947 on the Queen Elizabeth. Find out more about this excellent project in the British Pathé [blog](#).

National Archives

The National Archives have begun to archive official UK government department tweets and YouTube videos for permanent preservation on the [UK Government Web Archive](#). Their [press release](#) says, “The UK government social media archive contains over 7,000 videos that date from 2006 to early 2014 and over 65,000 tweets from 2008 to September 2013.” An initial browse around the beta Twitter and Video archives didn’t find any announcements about public libraries or school libraries; I’ll try again soon.

National Library of Scotland

Six-inch to a mile Ordnance Survey maps of England and Wales 1842-1952 are now [free to explore online](#) on the National Library of Scotland [website](#). Zoom to a location on the map

or type in a placename or postcode, then choose from the menu of maps offered. I've already been taking a look at my home near Aberystwyth; it has an Ordnance Survey [benchmark](#) on it, marking height above sea level. These are highlighted on the 1948 maps with a small black arrow and a reference in red.

Open Access

An important HEFCE-funded study [Open Access journals in Humanities and Social Science](#) by the British Academy has produced a number of findings which are generally positive with regard to the current embargo before research becomes available on OA repositories (2 years) and the stability of research relevance across disciplines as indicated by downloads. However there are problems for Research Council funding generated by the lack of OA availability outside the UK for disciplines such as English Literature and Modern Languages within current UK OA rules, and a lack of understanding and compliance internationally. The British Academy's [press release](#) also points to other factors impacting the research sector as OA expands, in particular recommending that, "the rising price of journals, at a time of budgetary restraints, needs to be addressed systemically."

Meanwhile the clock is ticking. HE funding councils for England, Scotland & Wales, and the Department for Employment and Learning, have announced that OA will be a requirement for UK research funding, "...from 2016 they will expect all articles submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), a system for assessing the quality of research, to be available by open access" (JISC announcement [31/03/14](#)). The REF will be used subsequently, "to inform the selective allocation of their research funding to higher education institutions".

Finally on OA, Robert Kiley the Head of Digital Services at the Wellcome Library has written a very timely [blog](#) following up data regarding their OA publishing spend in the year 2012-2013. They have found that APC charges from traditional journal publishers are, "significantly higher than that charged by the born-digital open access publishers, like PLOS", and a case study of Elsevier found that a small number of papers submitted to them had not been made OA.

Oxford English Dictionary

In amongst the crop of [new sub-entries](#) for [the OED in March 2014](#) here's a few for librarians: book group, book-loving, scientific journal and semantic web.

Tate

A [new online audio archive](#) is now available from the Tate: [Audio Arts](#) magazine (1972-2004) was published in cassette tape form consisting of more than 1,640 interviews with artists and other individuals from the art world, plus sound performances and other sound works. Edited by the British sound artist William Furlong, Audio Arts interviewees include Andy Warhol, John Cage, Rachel Whiteread, Damien Hirst and Sam Taylor-Wood and most appear to have contributed more than once. The archive website includes scans of the cassette inlays and start time indexing where an audio clip includes multiple interviewees.

Intranets

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UX for intranets

Considerations of user experience have been part of intranet design since the beginning, though naturally it has played a bigger part since we moved on from intranets-as-mere-repositories-of-shared-stable-information¹.

Although the expression seems tautological (who wouldn't design an intranet with the end-users' experience in mind?), as usual there's a lot more to it.

Firstly, doesn't user experience just boil down to usability? Secondly, can we really design something as subjective as the experiences of the users of intranets? Thirdly, there are competing philosophies, primarily task-based design.

1. User experience isn't just usability

In 2004 Peter Morville designed the User Experience Honeycomb diagram, primarily to point out that UX must include much more than usability: also fundamental are the users' perceptions of the extent to which the product or system is useful, desirable, valuable, findable, accessible and credible².



Peter Morville's User Experience Honeycomb

¹ Intranet generation one of 4 (so far). See [eLucidate Vol. 10 Issue 4, December 2013, pp 10-13](#).

² <http://semanticstudios.com/publications/semantics/000029.php>

While I can recommend Peter's Semantic Studios website and associated blog for their passion and fresh ideas on the subject, his turn of phrase can sometimes be a bit oblique: try his definition of useful: "As practitioners (of information architecture and user experience design), we can't be content to paint within the lines drawn by managers. We must have the courage and creativity to ask whether our products and systems are useful, and to apply our deep knowledge of craft and medium to define innovative solutions that are more useful." This seems to put the decision in the hands of the designer, based on their understanding of what is possible rather than the true user experience.

2. Intranet designers design *for* user experience.

UX is about how a person *feels* about using the intranet. Of course the users' feelings can't be dictated, so they must be elicited and responded to in a series of trials. They must also be recognised as dynamic, and affected as much by organisational culture and professional expectations as they are by personal experience and understanding.

As such there are many disciplines that go into designing the intranet in the light of potential and actual UX, each of which seem to address the 7 characteristics of Morville's honeycomb.

User Research - understanding the people who use the intranet, primarily by observing use.

Content Strategy - Planning for the creation, delivery and governance of *useful, valuable* content.

Information Architecture - Designing the organisation of information in a way that is both purposeful (from the providers' context) and meaningful (from the users'). This addresses the *accessibility* and *findability* issues.

Interaction Design - identifying (while trying not to prescribe) appropriate interactive channels through which the users can act as they use the intranet.

Visual Design - using the understanding of the intranet designers and in-house experts in image, identity, brand, and the power of emotional design.

Usability Evaluation - measuring the quality of each user's experience of interacting with the intranet, recognising that since quality of experience can only be measured at an individual level, there is much significant work to do to filter those through the priorities and expectations of the enterprise.

3. Task-based design - a competing philosophy

In contrast to UX design, task-based design focuses on tasks and their efficient performance as the key design object. It has a lot to recommend it: surely if the tasks required by the organisation are used as the determinant of internet interface design, the

work needed by the organisation will be carried out and, as long as they have been identified correctly, the intranet will fulfil its enterprise role.

There are two main objections to this: the observation that when it comes down to it people act from sentiment, not logic; and in most work environments, particularly knowledge based ones, it is impossible to anticipate the tasks the users of an intranet will need to perform over any reasonable life expectancy. Hume has it that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them”³. Leaving out the “ought to be”, this is a shrewd observation and appropriate to even the most regimented work environments. Most managers do seem to realise that even where the logic of task fulfilment is recognised by staff, the performance of those tasks by human beings is only reliably ensured if it coincides with their emotions, strivings, ambitions, satisfactions. To allow an intranet design to be dominated by task fulfilment as a higher priority than user experience satisfaction is often a prime way to ensure the intranet is underused.

It is said that the realistic life span of an intranet design is three years, though many of course last a lot longer than that (the oldest *original version* intranet I have seen operating as the approved focus of work functions is 11 years). In 3 years how many times would you expect a prioritised task list for your organisation to change? And if the specific way each task was to be carried out is included, even more often!

Room for two?

A solution, where an intranet can be designed to last, and support the strategic objectives of the organisation, may lie with a joint focus on user experience on one hand and function (as a more enduring alternative to the minutiae of a task-based approach) on the other. With the speed of change and discovery in the emotional side of design it is likely that the user experience focus will continue to determine the direction if not always the content, of the design of the modern intranet.

A most worthy & exciting intranet conference!

An unusual event is in preparation for September, with the support and admiration of UKeIG. (See press release for further information.) **Intranet Now**, the brainchild principally of Wedge Black and Brian Lamb, has found a location (Radisson Blu Hotel, Portman Square London W1), a date (2nd September) and enough sponsors and media partners (including UKeIG) to announce itself as a truly independent UK intranet conference.

All the details, and online access to tickets via Eventbrite are available at <http://intranetnow.kilobox.net/>

With a remarkable gestation period of only 4 months, the conference will be full of interesting talks, with unconference group discussions in the afternoon. A snip even at the

³ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, by David Hume 1739.

full price of £120, this un/conference is a must for enterprises which are serious about keeping their intranet staff inspired and informed. See you there!

Cloud Computing

Martin De Saulles, Principal Lecturer in Information Management,
University of Brighton

www.mdesaulles.net

I've been struggling with this column over the past couple of months but not been quite sure why. There are plenty of stories about cloud computing in the news with new services being launched, companies being taken over and massive investments being made in infrastructure. IBM, for example, announced a few days ago that it was investing almost £1 billion in expanding its data centres around the world and Google spent over \$3 billion buying Nest, a maker of internet-connected devices such as thermostats and smoke alarms. IBM's investments reinforces the seemingly unstoppable trend for companies, large and small, to outsource their data processing and storage requirements. Google's acquisition adds strength to the "internet of things" hypothesis that eventually most of the devices we use at home and work will be connected to the internet with the "cloud" acting as the repository for the data these "things" are throwing off.

So with all these activities taking place, why have I been struggling to write this column? It came to me earlier this week when I realised that what we call "cloud computing" is now becoming so embedded in our working and personal lives it is becoming less interesting to write about. I've seen this first hand with many of the small and medium-sized marketing and design companies I've been talking to over the last couple of years as well as with my students at the University of Brighton. Cloud-based communication and collaboration services such as Gmail, Dropbox, Basecamp and Evernote are being used by these companies without a second thought as workers need mobile access to theirs' and their colleagues' work wherever they are. The thought of being tied to a PC to access files now seems like something from the dark ages. Similarly, most of my students keep their work in the cloud on Dropbox, Google Drive or any of the multitude of services offering gigabytes of free storage. While cloud computing may still seem like a novelty to people of my generation (I'm 49 by the way) it is the de facto way of working for the next generation of workers. I teach on an undergraduate degree, BA (Hons) Digital Media but, as most media is now created, distributed and consumed in digital format, the prefix "digital" to this course is becoming unnecessary. Similarly, as our interactions with computing devices (PCs, laptops, tablets and smart phones) almost always rely on an internet connection and making calls on remote servers, I feel that "cloud computing" is really just computing and a dedicated column is no longer necessary. Therefore, this is my last cloud computing piece for eLucidate.

However, I will be back in the next edition with a new column on web and social media analytics. Understanding and using the data being generated from our interactions with websites and social media platforms is an exciting and emerging area for many information workers. My teaching and consulting work in digital marketing increasingly

involves analysing such data and using a range of tools to extract meaning from it. I look forward to writing about it in eLucidate over the coming months.

Information Management

Martin White, Intranet Focus Ltd

martin.white@intranetfocus.com

Without any doubt the most fascinating consulting assignment of my career was developing an intranet strategy for the International Monetary Fund. My team worked through a mass of paperwork starting at lunch on Sunday and did not finish until late in the evening. On Monday we started work on the project and were shown to our project office, the first and only time that I have had a project office for an assignment. The day was full of introductions and briefings, and all went well.

The same could not be said for Tuesday. I remember that it was a beautiful morning, a bright blue sky, and it was such a pleasure to walk to work that day. The team were having our first coffee of the day in the project office when the phone rang. It was just after 9am. One of my colleagues took the call - it was from her partner who was a stockbroker in London and he was calling to find out if we knew what was going on in New York as a plane had just flown into the World Trade Centre towers. The day was the 11th of September 2001, and the IMF office was in Washington, just over a mile from the Pentagon and the White House. 9/11 had started. After an hour or so the building was evacuated and we walked back to our hotel without anyone saying a word. Despite that tragic start the project went well and its success was instrumental in providing a reference site for future work.

Decisions on lending at the IMF are made by the representatives of the member countries. Prior to a discussion on a loan each of the representatives would be given two reports. One was a summary of the information that had been gathered by the IMF, usually during a number of visits to the country. The second was a version of the summary annotated with the source of every item of information, and who on the IMF staff was responsible for it. This might include several conflicting views on (say) GDP growth together with a consensus verdict from senior manager for the country. The annotated version was perhaps 6-8 times the size of the summary.

My subsequent experience meeting members of the Board of Directors of large organisations is that they take pride in how experienced their teams are at synthesising documents so that at Board meetings they have a document of perhaps 2-3 pages as a briefing for the decision. However as the interview proceeds it becomes clear that they do not know for certain how the information has been brought together, and what decisions have been made about what to include and what to exclude. All Board decisions, no matter how small the amount of money involved, will have an impact on the organisation.

The amount of information reaching the Board was a core theme of the report by Sir Christopher Kelly <http://www.thekellyreview.co.uk/> into the governance issues around

the losses sustained by The Cooperative Bank. From his recommendations comes this section (p126 of the report)

VI. To exercise appropriate supervision and challenge, boards need to be supplied with good management information, and to demand it if it is not forthcoming. Failure to obtain such information explains some of the failings in oversight at both Group and Bank.

14.22 Effective boards need clear and relevant information, provided in a timely fashion. This is particularly the case when those receiving the information have little experience on which to rely in understanding what is important.

14.23 Both Group and CBG Boards would have had a greater chance of providing effective oversight if their Executives had provided them with better information. Board papers examined during the course of the Review were frequently long on detail. But they sometimes omitted important information (or included it, but not in a prominent way), failed adequately to draw out key facts, or gave an overly optimistic picture of what was really happening.

14.24 This does not excuse either Board. Effective board members should have the ability to identify the information they need and the forcefulness to ask for it when not provided. It is hard to understand why the Group and CBG Boards, in particular the IPNEDs on the CBG Board, were not more forceful in demanding better information.

I wonder how many other organisations are in the same position and so are making decisions on inadequate information. As information professionals we should be aware of how information is flowing around the organisation, and perhaps most important of all being aware of the way in which information is being moved up the chain of decision making to senior managers and eventually to the Board. Research papers will always quote the sources used in the research project. Perhaps something along these lines should be a feature of the papers presented to the Board, with annotations such as

- Based on a discussion at the Oil and Gas conference gala dinner in December 2013
- This market potential revenue figure is taken from a report we commissioned in 2012 and John Gladstone has made some guesses at the expansion of the market over the last couple of years
- This analysis was prepared by Susan Jones, but she has now left us and we do not know how to contact her to find out the source of her information

Of course this could never be the situation in your organisation!

Book Review: Marketing with Social Media

London: Facet Publishing, 2014

178pp

ISBN: 978 1 78330 001 3

Reviewed by Margaret Katny, BBC Information & Archives

There are undoubtedly many books on using social media technologies to market a service but few that cover several technologies in one guide. This step-by-step guide introduces different technologies and shows the reader how to make use of them to market a library service.

The social media technologies covered include Facebook, wikis, video-sharing sites, Pinterest, Google+, Foursquare, blogs, QR codes and Twitter. It is unlikely that any library will want or need to use all of these tools and this guide equips the readers with the knowledge to select the ones that will work best in their library's context and meet their user needs.

Contributions come from 17 US-based academics and librarians. Each chapter includes an introduction, describes features of the technology and ushers the readers through the implementation process. There are numerous screenshots and case studies, advice on best practice as well as tips on evaluating, assessing and using statistics.

The authors make no assumptions about the level of the readers' social media knowledge. For example, the chapter on Twitter describes creating an account, choosing the library user name, icon and profile, developing a marketing plan, finding, following and tweeting, Twitter vocabulary and how to use hashtags. For readers who wish to go beyond these functions there is also an explanation of social media management systems (TweetDeck and HootSuite). The chapter gives sufficient information not only to start marketing your library on Twitter but also to sustain the marketing campaign and establish Twitter presence and identity.

This work makes it clear that whichever social media platform is chosen as a marketing tool, it is important for libraries to provide a regular content stream and follow the accepted frequency of updates for a given social media tool. Stagnant, out of date content on any social media forum can discourage the users from engaging with a library. It is recommended that, for example, Twitter accounts for libraries should be updated at least once a day. There are, of course, various tools for managing and monitoring accounts on social media platforms and some of these are mentioned throughout the book.

It is worth noting that good, old-fashioned marketing principles still apply - consistent branding, meaningful account names and profiles and relevant messaging. There is a possibility that libraries may confuse or even alienate the customers by utilising multiple marketing tools so the need for recognisable branding is essential.

This guide demonstrates how social media technologies have made it possible for any library to market itself with little or no cost - all that is needed is an interest in social media marketing and the motivation to get started. This guide is certainly a very good starting point.

New & Forthcoming Books

The following selection of published and forthcoming books are relevant to members' interests. Please email the editor if you are interested in reviewing one or more of them. Similarly, if you are aware of any publications that you feel would be of interest to eLucidate readers, please alert us or consider a review.

Exploring Digital Libraries - Foundations, Practice, Prospects

Karen Calhoun

January 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-820-0

A thought-provoking, authoritative and in-depth treatment of the digital library arena that provides an up-to-date overview of the progress, nature and future impact of digital libraries, from their collections and technology-centred foundations over two decades ago to their emergent, community-centred engagement with the social web. "This book is informed by the rich and varied professional experience of its author, by extensive research across several national and international contexts, and by a rare synthesising ability. It fills a clear gap in the library literature, exploring technical and research developments from the perspective of evolving library services and organization."

- Lorcan Dempsey

Web Metrics for Library and Information Professionals

David Stuart

January 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-874-3

A clear guide for library and information professionals as to what web metrics are available and how to assess and use them to make informed decisions and demonstrate value.

Library and Information Science A Guide to Key Literature and Sources

Michael Bemis

March 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78330-002-0

This unique annotated bibliography is a complete, up-to-date guide to sources of information on library and information science.

Metaliteracy - Reinventing Information Literacies to Empower Learners

Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson

April 2014

ISBN: 9781783300129

Respected information literacy experts Mackey and Jacobson present a comprehensive structure for information literacy theory that builds on decades of practice while recognizing the knowledge required for an expansive and interactive information environment.

Information Governance and Assurance - Reducing risk, promoting policy

Alan MacLennan

May 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-940-5

This comprehensive textbook discusses the legal, organisational and ethical aspects of information governance and information security and their relevance to all aspects of information work.

Preserving Complex Digital Objects

Janet Delve and David Anderson, editors

June 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-958-0

This ground-breaking edited collection explores the challenges of preserving complex digital objects such as simulations, visualisations, digital art and video games. Drawing on the outputs of the JISC-funded Preservation of Complex Objects (POCOS) symposia, enhanced with specialist pathfinder solutions, this book will cover topics such as the legal and technical challenges of preservation, curation and authority, and digital archaeology. Written by international experts from a broad background of library, collecting institutions, information and computer science, and digital preservation backgrounds, this collection showcases the state of the art of the discipline and brings together stakeholder perspectives from across the preservation community.

Social Media for Creative Libraries - How to Maximise Impact and Reach

Phil Bradley

December 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-713-5

Building on his acclaimed work *How to Use Web 2.0 in Your Library*, social media guru Phil Bradley explains exactly how libraries can get the most out of the gamut of social and real-time media technologies available. The book takes a practical look at the activities that librarians undertake to see how they can be better achieved - more quickly, more efficiently and with more impact - using social media tools. Bradley introduces the different types of social media tools and shows you how to choose the ones best suited to your library - and how to get the best out of them. Offering an accessible starting point for people with no prior subject knowledge as well as expert tips for more experienced technology users, this invaluable guide makes the case for social media technologies and shows how to make them work for you. Packed with features and accompanied by introductory videos on YouTube, this is one book no forward-thinking library can afford to be without.

Marketing Concepts for Libraries and Information Services, 3rd edition

Eileen Elliott de Sáez

December 2014

ISBN: 978-1-85604-870-5

This third edition of the best-selling textbook offers information professionals a

comprehensive foundation and structure for effective strategic marketing and shows how they can use this to enable their library to grow, develop and find new perspectives.

Press Releases

UKeiG to sponsor place at CILIP New Professionals Day 2014

UKeiG is pleased to offer a sponsored place for a student or early-career professional to attend the CILIP New Professionals Day on Friday 10th October (see <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/events/cilips-new-professionals-day-2014>) under its Student or Early-Career Professional Conference Grant scheme. CILIP's New Professionals Day is the annual conference aimed at library and information professionals who are seeking guidance on their initial steps into their first professional roles. If you are still studying at university, have recently finished your information qualification or are in your first professional post, then this event is for you.

Applications are welcomed for this award, which covers standard class travel to London as well as the event fee if you are not a CILIP member (it is free to CILIP members). To apply please write a paragraph outlining why you would like to attend the event and how you would benefit from attendance, and send it to awards@ukeig.org.uk.

It is a condition of winning that a short 'conference report' is presented for publication in eLucidate.

The UK conference for Comms & Intranet people

['Intranet Now'](#) is a brand new UK conference for everyone who contributes to an intranet. Join 130+ intranet practitioners on Tuesday, 2nd of September in Central London for a full day focusing on how the intranet is best used to support business goals.

Intranet Now is a completely independent endeavour, supported by UKeiG along with Interact, Igloo, dwg and many others and organised by Brian Lamb and Wedge Black. 'Everyone' wanted an independent UK conference, and so Brian and Wedge thought they would make it happen.

On 2nd September you will hear from some of the country's leading independent intranet experts, and from intranet managers with case studies from famous brands and charities in a mix of 20 minute and 5 minute talks.

The conference is about the role of the intranet in the digital workplace and will be about the intranet now, not about future technologies. There will be space and time to learn from each other, to discuss what works well and what doesn't.

You'll be cared for within a grand venue at the Radisson Blu, Portman Square, with a good lunch but no dress code. The focus may be on business, but the approach is informal.

Jason Farradane Award 2014 Call for Nominations

The Jason Farradane Award is made to an individual or a group of people in recognition of outstanding work in the information profession.

Criteria

The Award is given in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the information profession, by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Raising the profile of the information profession within an organisation or field of endeavour in a way which has become an exemplar to others
- Raising the awareness of the value of information in the workplace
- Demonstrating excellence in education and teaching in information science;
- A major contribution to the theory and practice of information science or information management

Jason Farradane graduated in chemistry in 1929 at what is now Imperial College and started work in industry as a chemist and documentalist. After working in research at the Ministry of Supply and the Admiralty during World War II, he first made an impact with a paper on the scientific approach to documentation at a Royal Society Scientific Information Conference in 1948.

He was instrumental in establishing the Institute of Information Scientists in 1958 and the first academic courses in information science in 1963 at the precursor of City University, where he became Director of the Centre for Information Science in 1966. Of Central European origin, his commitment to science was reflected in the name he created for himself - a combination of Faraday and Haldane, two scientists he particularly admired. On the research side his main contributions lay in relational analysis, which can now perhaps be seen as providing a precursor to work in the area of A.I., and the concept of information. He saw information science as a step towards understanding and better organizing ourselves.

All enquiries to awards@ukeig.org.uk

Strix Award 2014 Call for Nominations

The Strix Award is presented in memory of Dr Tony Kent, a past Fellow of the Institute of Information Scientists, who died in 1997, and celebrates work in the field of information retrieval.

Tony Kent made a major contribution to the development of information science and information services both in the UK and internationally, particularly in the field of chemistry. The name 'Strix' was chosen to reflect Tony's interest in ornithology, and as the name of the last and most successful information retrieval packages that he created. The Award is managed by an Executive Committee and UKeiG in partnership with the Chemical Information and Computer Applications Group of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC CICAG); the International Society for Knowledge Organisation UK Chapter (ISKO UK) and

the British Computer Society Information Retrieval Specialist Group (BCS IRSG).

The Award is given in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the field of information retrieval in its widest sense - thus, for example, including search and data mining - that meets one of the following criteria:

- A major and/or sustained contribution to the theoretical or experimental understanding of the information retrieval process
- Development of, or significant improvement in, mechanisms, a product or service for the retrieval of information, either generally or in a specialised field
- Development of, or significant improvement in, ease of access to an information service
- Development and/or exploitation of new technologies to enhance information retrieval
- A sustained contribution over a period of years to the field of information retrieval; for example, by running an information service or by contributing at national or international level to organisations active in the field

Nominations are assessed by a panel of judges and past winners. Key characteristics for which they will look are innovation, initiative, originality and practicality. The Award is open to individuals or groups from anywhere in the world.

All enquiries to awards@ukeig.org.uk



As part of our ongoing agreement with Internet Librarian International (21 & 22 October, Olympia Conference Centre, London), we are pleased to announce that UKeiG members are entitled to a 25% discount on the full conference fee. To access the discount, simply enter priority code UKEIG25 at online registration:

www.internet-librarian.com

Inspirational keynote speakers are Michael Edson (*Smithsonian Institution; Open Knowledge Foundation; CLIR, USA*) on 'The Dark Matter of the Internet' and Rachel Neaman (*CEO of digital inclusion charity, Go ON UK, exploring how digital skills are empowering people, businesses and countries*) on 'Go ON UK.'

Other Internet Librarian International 2014 highlights:

- Conference theme - Positive Change: Creating Real Impact
- 55 conference presentations - including over 40 case studies
- 70 world-class speakers
- Delegates from over 30 countries
- The brand new X Track
- 'ILI App' - a co-created conference experience
- British Library visit - a behind-the-scenes tour of London's iconic library
- Workshops, networking, social events, Sponsor Showcase, plus proud hosts of UKeiG's Tony Kent Strix and Jason Farradane Awards

**25% discount for
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Internet Librarian International 2014
Workshops 20 October
Conference 21 & 22 October
Olympia Conference Centre, London
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registration to access 25%
discount on full conference fee***

www.internet-librarian.com

About eLucidate

eLucidate is the journal of the UK Electronic Information Group. It is usually published four times each year, in February, April, September and November. Its aim is to keep members up to date with developments in the digital information environment, as they affect professionals. The magazine is provided free to UKeIG members.

Notes for contributors

eLucidate welcomes articles or ideas for articles in the areas covered by the magazine. We are always on the lookout for feature writers, reviewers both for books and for meetings, as well as respondents to articles. Sadly, we don't pay contributors, but contributors retain copyright of their articles and can republish their articles elsewhere.

If you are writing for eLucidate, please follow these simple guidelines:

About the members

Our membership comprises information professionals involved in the dissemination and/or delivery of digital content and services. Our membership base is two-thirds academic, one-third commercial, as well as some public libraries. A key benefit of the group is that meetings and forums provide "crossover" insight from one area to another: members see it as a way of keeping up to date in areas outside their core. Few other organisations provide this kind of cross-sectoral awareness. The focus of the group is the UK, in the sense that authentication concerns tend to be around JISC tools such as Athens and Shibboleth. But the issues of digital provision are of course global. The most popular training courses we run are on search tools – Google and others; ebooks and how to deal with them. Other popular strands include Intranets, content

management, bibliographic software, and ebooks.

Technical level

Although members rate themselves highly for technical awareness, they are typically users rather than creators of technology. Articles should not assume understanding of technical terms without explanation.

Length of article

Feature articles should be in the region of 1500-2500 words. Each article should be prefaced by a short summary (around 50 words) that can be used when displaying on public search engines an outline of the article, and to display on the non-member section of the website.

What to write

A key aspect of UKeIG is that it provides insight from one area to another – members see it as a way of keeping up to date in areas outside their core expertise. Because the membership is quite disparate, ranging from pharmaceutical information professionals to public librarians, you should not assume readers are as familiar as you in the subject area.

The most valuable viewpoint you can give is that of an end user. UKeIG is not a place for theoretical debate, but a forum where peers can share their experiences and understanding. So, if it worked for you, tell others. If it didn't, tell others why not.

How to submit

Please e-mail your article to gary.horrocks@gmail.com. Articles should be delivered in Word or in an ASCII format. Images are welcome – they may be in gif or jpeg formats.

Rights

By submitting an article to eLucidate, authors grant UKeiG the non-exclusive right to publish the material in any format in perpetuity. However, authors retain full rights in their content and remain the copyright owner.

About you

Please provide a 10-20-word biographical summary about yourself to appear at the end of the article.

Editorial process

Your article will be copy-edited for spelling and for sense. If there are major changes to the article we may return it to you for your comments and approval, but most articles require only light corrections before appearing in eLucidate, and do not need a further review by the author.

Brief for book reviews

Book reviews are typically 600-1000 words. Because UKeiG is independent of any publisher, we are not obliged to have favourable reviews. If you think a book is poor, then by all means explain why. Members and non-members alike are welcome to suggest books for review or to submit reviews.