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Wandering the Web -- Business Research on the Open Web, Served 10 Ways

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him/her. So while they may or may not care what version of a paper they read, they all want to give authors their due by passing along the version of record.

Finally, in large part because I, like **Whitney Houston**, believe the children are our future, I asked the three scholars how they would advise students beginning their own research careers if asked about the acceptability of reading and referencing non-authoritative versions. The humanist feels most strongly that the version of record is what should be both read and cited. His belief is that this is the one copy of the article most likely to be unaltered both today and into the future, and, therefore, the one copy to which all readers can uniformly relate, as it were. The social scientist and the physical scientist were less dogmatic. They acknowledge that if a paper is readily accessible in non-definitive form that this convenience may outweigh the possible negatives of relying on something other than the version of record. They also both teach their students the distinction between reading and referencing. For them, accurate citations to the definitive version matter, a lesson which they pass along to their pupils.

My focus group of three does not put the issue of article versioning to bed once and for all. What it tells me, though, is that three professors I trust actually know about this issue. They have thought about it independent of the questions I posed to them. And they care about it as it fits into larger questions of access and long-term citation trails. The reality on the ground, if we are to extrapolate from this gang of three, is that article versioning matters not just to publishers and librarians, but to the constituents we serve. They balance this concern with a desire to actually get at the content in a quick and painless manner. As we continue to debate this issue at our industry conferences, in our blogs, and on our listservs, we should be mindful of the fragile equilibrium between accessibility and provenance that informs the reality on the ground. 🌸

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: I was born in South West London and lived there most of my life until moving to Bristol nine years ago with my lovely husband.

EARLY LIFE: I grew up with two younger brothers and a cornucopia of pets. When I was 11, I desperately wanted to be a nurse. I studied English at **Goldsmiths College** in London and did my dissertation on the influence of folklore in women's writing. I have always been passionate about storytelling and its role in formal and social education.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: My entire career has been spent in marketing in publishing services or STM in some capacity. I've worked at the **Natural History Museum** in London and at **Elsevier** for *The Lancet* (working particularly on the launches of *The Lancet Oncology* and *The Lancet Neurology*). I joined **IOP Publishing** in 2002 to manage the marketing for journals outside of the Americas, and nine years and two children later, I am now the company PR manager.

FAMILY: My husband **Nathan** (who I met when we both worked at **Elsevier**), my son, **Frank** (4) and daughter, **Rosa** (18 months) and two cheeky cats.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I wish!

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *The Collector* by **John Fowles**. I collect Ladybird books partly for my children but mostly for me.

PET PEEVES: Smoking and all the bad 'isms'.

PHILOSOPHY: A life lived in fear is a life half-lived.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: There are lots, as I have been lucky enough to work on some of the best brands in STM. Editing my first issue of the membership magazine for the **Natural History Museum** was definitely a memorable career moment, as was being nominated as a candidate for the STM board for the STM association. Leading on the marketing campaigns for launching the **IOP Journal Archive** and titles like *The Lancet Oncology* and the *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics* have also been great personal achievements.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: For my children to be growing up happy and healthy and to somehow successfully balance all the pressures of being a working mother.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I've seen a lot of changes in my 15 years in STM publishing, and it is incredibly difficult to predict what is going to be next as there are so many external and internal pressures exerting themselves on the industry. Publishers have a vital role to play in the scholarly communication process, and our goal has to be to demonstrate and communicate that value to our customers whilst responding swiftly to their changing needs. 🌸



Wandering the Web — Business Research on the Open Web, Served 10 Ways

by **John Gottfried** (Business Librarian, Western Kentucky University Libraries, Bowling Green, KY)

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Column Editor's Note: As our Business Librarian in the Department of Library Public Services, **John Gottfried** is a new colleague who has an MBA and a MA in Organizational Management from the **University of Colorado**. **John** is a prolific writer and presenter and is our authority on research in business. — **JM**

"Searching is half the fun: life is much more manageable when thought of as a scavenger hunt as opposed to a surprise party." — Jimmy Buffett

As anyone who has tried it can confirm, business research is always challenging, sometimes frustrating, and the costs can quickly blast all but the most robust budget to insolvency. In the current business climate, however, timely, accurate information is an absolute imperative for effective decision-making. The payoff, in other words, is normally well worth the pain and the price. Now I can make business research

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neither cheap nor easy, but I can remove a little of the sting by offering a few tips on finding the most commonly sought-after forms of business information on the open Web, free-of-charge.

1. Company Information

Yahoo Finance — <http://finance.yahoo.com/> — Perhaps the most common form of business research involves obtaining information about a specific company. This information may be used to make critical decisions concerning investment, employment, supporting a company's entry into the community, or purchasing products and services. An excellent first step in accumulating company information is a visit to **Yahoo Finance**. By entering the company name or ticker symbol, you can obtain a general profile of the company, top executives, financial statements, key statistics, analysts' forecasts, major competitors, and much more. In fact, **Yahoo** provides access to at least some of the information described in many of the sites that follow — SEC filings, historic stock prices & charts, complete business news, industry information, and so on — so **Yahoo Finance** is the closest I can offer to a free, one-stop source of business information.

2. Industry Information

Hoover's — www.hoovers.com/industries/100003568-1.html — When foraging for free business information, one of the toughest trials involves seeking reliable, complete reports on specific industries. A good place to start would be **Hoover's**, which offers sparse but useful industry reports, including some basic facts about the industry as a whole, a report on risks and opportunities, and a few words about the competitive environment. Be forewarned, however, that **Hoover's** free reports are woefully short on hard data. Added to some of the industry data found on **Yahoo Finance's** industry reports, however, they will help you to form a good general picture of the industry.

U.S. Census Bureau: Business & Industry — <http://www.census.gov/econ/index.html> — To add to your industry statistics without emptying your wallet, move on to the **U.S. Census Bureau, Business & Industry** section. Here you will find both monthly and annual data reports by industry, along with e-commerce quarterly reports. Reports include sales, change in sales, and other data appropriate to the specific industry. As with the Websites of many government agencies, navigation through the site can be difficult, and it may take some experimentation to find what you're looking for — but intrepid researchers will be rewarded for their perseverance.

3. SEC Filings

EDGAR — www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml — Created by the **U.S. Securities and Exchange** to facilitate the availability and dissemination of important financial information about companies doing business in the United States, **EDGAR** is a searchable database containing nearly all **SEC** filings, including financial statements and annual reports. This database is available free, and the **SEC** has, in recent years, made impressive improvements to its notoriously cumbersome interface. Access is still awkward, and **EDGAR** content is available in a more user-friendly form in commercial databases such as **Mergent Online**. For a free resource, however, **EDGAR** is an effective offering, providing highly useful information for only a small investment of time, patience, and practice.

4. Stock Prices and Analysis

Zack's — www.zacks.com/ — There are a fair number of sources offering timely access to stock prices, but **Zack's** is easily among the best. Similar in many ways to **Yahoo Finance** (see above), **Zack's** offers stock prices both current and historic, with stock charts going back ten years. It provides highly regarded stock ratings and analysis. **Zack's** also offers earnings estimates and forecasts, comparison of company performance to industry, financial statements, and news about the company. Additionally, there are numerous links to useful bits of advice on buying and trading stocks and securities, and, of course, more resources are available if you are willing to pay a substantial fee.

5. Small Business/Entrepreneurship

Small Business Administration — www.sba.gov — The **Small Business Administration** has a big mission: no less than seeking to “preserve free competitive enterprise,” and “strengthen the overall economy of the United States.” They support small business in a number of highly effective ways — for our purposes, the most relevant are an online “virtual campus” offering free courses on a number of useful business topics, and a library containing materials on such topics as marketing, statistics, and business law. There is also a very helpful **Small Business Planner**, which provides guidance in preparing a business plan, and a number of other resources to aid the aspiring entrepreneur throughout the process of starting and running a successful business. This, along with many other resources, makes the **Small Business Administration** site a valuable tool for anyone considering an independent business start-up.

6. Business News

Reuters — www.reuters.com/ — In the very competitive business news industry there are many fine contenders, but the overall nod must go to **Reuters**. When **Reuters** began, after all, its primary undertaking was to provide the financial markets with reliable trading information. **Reuters** has since expanded its mission to become a respected international news provider, but its lineage shines through in the form of exceptional business news coverage, organized by industries, sectors, markets, geographic regions, and topics. In addition to the news, **Reuters** supplies highly regarded opinions and analysis of business issues.

7. Business Law

FindLaw Small Business Center — <http://smallbusiness.findlaw.com/> — Getting good legal information without running up an outrageous bill is always a trial, and nowhere is this a greater challenge than in the money-motivated world of business. We have previously discussed the **Small Business Administration**, and that site offers some useful information concerning business law.

Another very good free online resource is the **FindLaw Small Business Center**. It includes a variety of resources for starting a business (including forms and advice on many legal issues related to business start-ups) along with good segments covering business law for ongoing businesses. In an entirely separate section, **FindLaw** also offers tips on employment law and employee rights. Finally, this site also provides solid advice on finding effective legal representation, should your situation warrant moving on to this level.

8. Business Plans

One of the most important — and fearsome — tasks facing anyone starting a new business is the creation of a concise yet complete business plan. The business plan not only clarifies your own goals and strategies for the new enterprise; it is perhaps even more important as the primary means by which you communicate the value of your business to potential lenders, investors, partners, and other stakeholders. Once again I will begin with the **Small Business Administration's** **Small Business Planner**, which offers complete, step-by-step advice on creating your business plan. Other excellent free sources include:

Inc. Magazine: Guide to Business Plan Writing — http://www.inc.com/guides/write_biz_plan/20660.html — **Inc. Magazine's Business Plan Building, Section by Section** is another free, very helpful guide to creating your business plan. While not as detailed as the offering from the **Small Business Administration**, the advice in **Inc.** has been produced by seasoned business writers and practitioners, providing more of an insider's view. Note too that this is only one of a group of excellent, practical tools on the **Inc.** Webpage. There is an employee schedule template, for example, legal forms and documents, and a lot of good general business advice.

Bplans.com — www.bplans.com — A good addition to the above resources is **Bplans.com**, which offers over 500 free sample business plans in a number of industries and disciplines. There are, for example, 33 plans for construction and engineering, and 39 plans for consulting. **Bplans** also offers a number of valuable reports and articles on running a business, including materials on such topics as financing your business, running an online business, and buying an existing business. There are

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links to blogs, tips on writing a business plan in the United Kingdom, and many other constructive resources.

9. Management Issues

Entrepreneur Magazine's Management Advice & Guides — www.entrepreneur.com/management/index.html — Even the most astute practitioners in any field seek out some advice occasionally, and business managers should be no exception. When stumbling through the information jungle that is the Web, however, a lot of the advice, particularly the free advice, may range from questionable to the outright loopy. Fortunately, there are some excellent free resources available online, among them **Entrepreneur Magazine's Management Advice & Guides**. This group of articles offers quick, effective how-to advice on general management issues, legal problems, operations, human resources, and much more.

Free Management Library — <http://managementhelp.org> — If you prefer a second opinion, try **Free Management Library**, a free management advice site originally sponsored by the Management Assistance Program (MAP) for Nonprofits of St. Paul, Minnesota, but now operating independently. The **Free Management Library** offers advice on over 650 topics through links to Wiki-like contributors. None of the links on this site are allowed to ask for a separate registration, none may charge for information, and all must offer substantive information on the topic.

10. Human Resources & Labor

Workforce Online — <http://www.workforce.com> — Every business is, ultimately, about people, so constructive advice and pertinent resources to help deal with human resource issues are always valuable commodities. A great place to prospect for HR advice is **Workforce Online**, which provides a surprisingly wide array of resources covering a large number of topics in human resources and labor. Their Research Center supplies a searchable database containing thousands of articles, while the Community Center offers forums and networks to connect with HR professionals. The site also includes HR news items from across the country, and a good directory to HR services and vendors. Registration is required to use some of the resources, but the registration is free.

HR Tools — <http://www.hrtools.com/> — Another extremely useful site is **HR Tools**, a largely free site providing support in all areas of Human Resource practice, including hiring, benefits & compensation, training, leadership, policies, and law. Each section (many with numerous subsections) offers articles, guides, checklists, forms, and more. There is legal advice, HR news, and opinion pieces on virtually every topic. As with virtually any "free" site, if you drill down deep enough you get to some paid resources, but much of the site is truly free, and truly helpful.

And so forth...

The few resources described above should provide a useful stepstool to the broader world of effective Internet business research on the cheap. Clearly, it is only the bare beginning. To find more sites, you can simply place your topic in any major search engine and sort laboriously through the results. You can also try the sites below, which will supply you with a generous collection of links to many more free business research resources on the Web:

Library of Congress Business Reference Services: BEOnline Internet Subject Guides — <http://www.loc.gov/rr/business/beonline/subjectlist.php> — The **Library of Congress** started the BEOnline project in 1996 to provide a rich supply of research resources available online. BEOnline now offers Subject Guides on roughly 90 topics in business research, updated on a regular basis. It is basically just a big list of links available by subject or alphabetically by name, but it has been presorted for you, and is definitely easier than rummaging through thousands of random Web pages.

New York Public Library – Best of the Web: Business & Finance — <http://www.nypl.org/weblinks/1358> — You might also



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try the **New York Public Library's Best of the Web: Business & Finance**. It is a good collection of sites, organized by both topic and site name, but perhaps more selectively chosen than those at the **Library of Congress**. It includes many commonly sought types of business information, including some good leads on finding data & statistics. **NYPL** also offers resources for entrepreneurs and small business start-ups, and some good links to federal documents and free legal research resources.

And there you have it — not an end in itself, by any means, but at least a good start on carrying out free yet effective business research. It is my sincere hope that this turns out to be one of those rare cases in which free advice is worth a lot more than what you paid for it. 🐼

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Endnotes

1. At a meeting held in conjunction with the **2011 Online Information Asia-Pacific** meeting in Hong Kong. See <http://www.online-information.asia/>.
2. **Wikipedia**. This well known song was written originally in Spanish by the Mexican composer **Maria Mendez Grever**, but later popularized when it was rendered in English by **Stanley Adams** and sung by the likes of **Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughn, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett** and others: See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What_a_Diff'rence_a_Day_Made#Song_information.
3. While the Chinese and Koreans had employed wood block printing for several hundreds of years prior to the invention of moveable type for the printing of religious and philosophical texts, it was not until the turn of the first millennium that the alchemist **Pi Sheng** perfected the technology for engraving single characters on thousands of small character blocks and then gluing them to iron sheets for printing. See the following Website for additional information about early printing in China: <http://www.computersmiths.com/chineseinvention/movtype.htm>. **Gutenberg**, in the early 1440's developed moveable metal type. See the following for more information: <http://inventors.about.com/od/gstartinventors/a/Gutenberg.htm>.