IT INFORMATION SITES
by Jonathan Jermey

IDC and Gartner

IDC is a division of IDG, which provides research and consultancy services in 43 countries, including Australia and New Zealand. IDC's conference information and its research services are accessible through the Web site at http://www.idc.com.

Gartner is a similar company providing research and consultancy worldwide, also with involvement in conferences and training. Its home page can be found at http://www.gartner.com. I formed the impression that Gartner was more US-centric than IDC, but I am unable to substantiate this.

Home Page and Site Usability

The IDC home page is heavily graphic and rather busy, with several separate sets of links to a range of IDC services and a search bar at the top for quick access to documents, company names and individual analysts. General presentation is good but there are some spelling mistakes and careless typos throughout the site: for instance, 'European Professional Service *Applictions* Market'. In a site of this size a few errors and solecisms are inevitable, especially when many of the contributors do not have English as their first language.

The Gartner home page is more traditional, with blue underlined links, a columnar layout, and a convenient tab bar across the top. Most of the space is taken up with links to individual items of research and analysis. I did not find any typos in my examination of the site.

Both sites make extensive use of JavaScript but, as far as I can tell, avoid frames. Both sites are fairly easy to navigate, but it was difficult to get back to the IDC home page at times, and links didn't change colour to indicate visited pages. Some pages on the IDC site appeared to have been designed for a wider display than my 800 by 600 pixel screen, and required horizontal scrolling. None of this was a problem with the Gartner site. The Gartner site, however, uses a lot of links which open new ('pop-
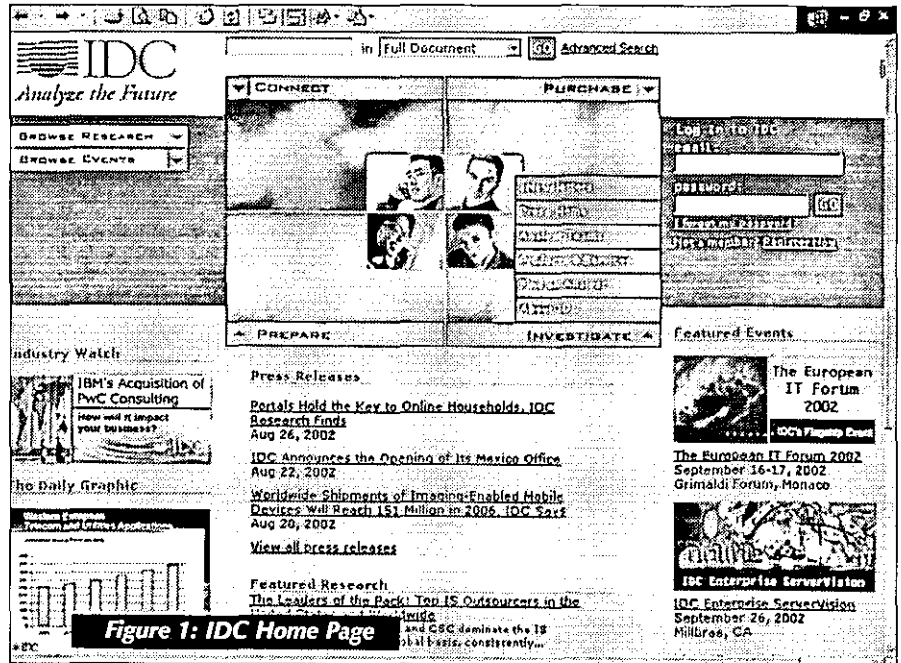

Figure 1: IDC Home Page

up') windows; this approach is known to be confusing for new users, particularly if they have pop-up protection programs running.

A potential issue with saving pages from the IDC site is that they appear with generic titles like 'IDC – Press Release'. To avoid overwriting already saved material and to help you find the material you want again later, you will need to rename the saved files to something more meaningful. On the Gartner site, the title of a page was always relevant to the page contents.
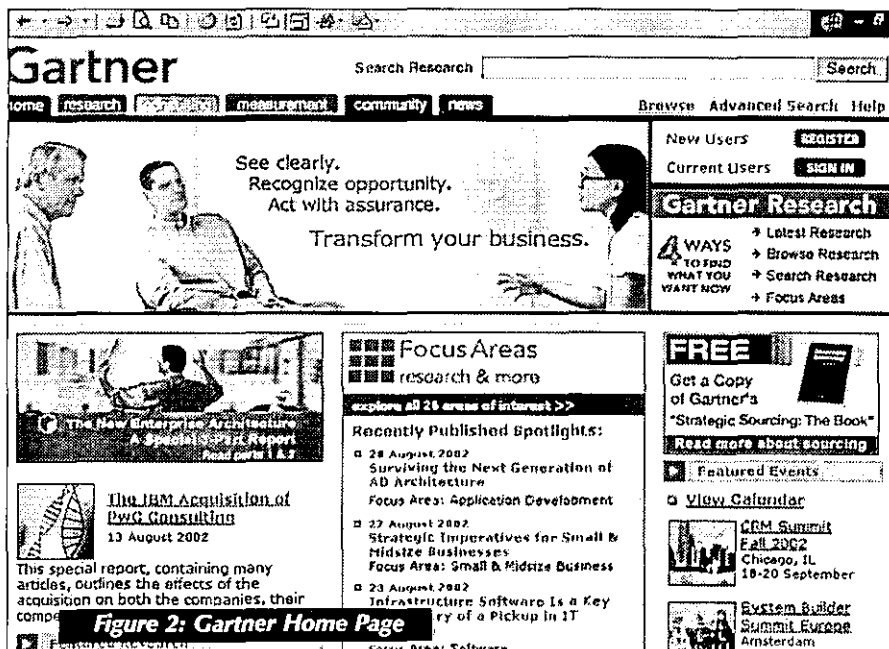
The IDC home page has a 'daily graphic' in the form of a link to a graph or chart in a one-slide PowerPoint presentation, and an 'industry watch' link which brings up a brief review of an industry trend. At the time of writing it concerned IBM's expansion through the purchase of other IT companies, with access to some free research information and a table summarising how IBM compares with its latest acquisition. The home page also links to some opinion pieces called 'Viewpoints'; these didn't have much

Figure 2: Gartner Home Page

depth and appeared to function mainly as 'teasers' for research articles.

Searching

The 'quick search' at the top of the IDC screen allows the user to enter a keyword and choose which field to search in from a drop-down list. Document titles, document full text, analyst last name, company names or 'geography', amongst others, can all be searched. The results can then be sorted by relevance, date published, title or author. The IDC 'advanced search' display allows limited Boolean searching, date brackets, and the specification of document type. None of these seemed to work the first time I used it, but on a second occasion it performed as it should.

On the Gartner site there was a single 'Search' field at the top of the screen with no other information; presumably this does a full-text search of the articles on the site. Selecting 'advanced search' brings up a new window offering a wide choice of document types, topics, authors, regions and areas of interest. Impecunious users can also specify that they want to see free research only.

A search for *ebooks* on both sites turned up a different set of articles than a search for *e-books*, so it's unlikely that a thesaurus is used in identifying keywords. (Interestingly, *e-books* was the preferred term on Gartner (42 articles to 3) while *ebooks* was preferred on IDC (118 to 14). Is there a national bias here?

Registration and Customisation

Users can register with IDC for free by submitting an e-mail address and nominating a password. Registered users can join in with Web conferences and telebriefings. They can also compile a permanent 'bookcase' of links to IDC press releases and articles that are of interest to them. To purchase articles from the site users need to be registered; they can then activate a 'shopping cart' service to collect the reports and bulletins they want and buy them all in a single transaction.

Users can register with Gartner in the same way, but as far as I could tell there was no advantage to doing so, other than that it allows you to purchase articles.

Press Releases

The IDC home page lists press releases which are fairly

detailed in themselves, but also act as 'teasers' for purchasable reports. The press release links sometimes include a sentence or two from the release. Titles reveal a high level of interest in Europe, with somewhat less prominence given to Asia and Australasia. About one press release appears per day, and they are stored in a searchable archive, with 698 entries at the time of writing (August 2002). Some typical subjects: 'European IT Market Is Entering Initial Phase of Recovery'; 'Worldwide Shipments of Imaging-Enabled Mobile Devices Will Reach 151 Million in 2006', and 'Customer Relationship Management Software Market Set For A Reversal of Fortune in Singapore'. A search within the press releases for titles mentioning 'Australia' turned up only one result, from June 2002: 'Customer Relationship Management Software Market Picks Up Steam in Australia'.

The Gartner site does not list press releases as such, although the home page links to current announcements about the company itself.

Analysts

IDC provides details of their analysts' backgrounds and qualifications, although e-mail addresses aren't given. Analysts can be booked as speakers at conferences and special events. Analysts are grouped into teams of between about four and thirty individuals (e.g. 'Asia/Pacific Servers and Workstations Team') and the user can see team members displayed alongside the research reports they are responsible for. The user can search for articles written or co-written by a particular analyst.

Gartner supports a search for authors in the 'advanced search' screen, but if you know an analyst's surname you can do a simple search for it like any other text. There was no indication of a team structure here.

Both sites provide links from authors' names to their biographies, which in turn list and link to the articles they have written or co-written.

Featured Events, Upcoming Web Conferences and Telebriefings

Conferences and other activities organised by IDC are shown with links to programs and lists of speakers and sponsors. Coming up at the time of writing was the European IT forum in Monaco on September 16–17; a nice gig if you can get it.

Figure 3: Gartner Advanced Search

For the less well-heeled, IDC runs phone-based 'telebriefings' – one soon on 'Technical Computing Quarterly Update, Q2 2002' – and Web conferences: the next being on 'Extending Content Technologies Through XML: The Advantages, Trends, and Opportunities' with Susan Funke. Registering for these events involves filling out and submitting a form, but participation appears to be free.

Gartner also runs conferences – including the CRM Summit in Chicago, where you can learn to 'Synergistically balance strategy, tactics, processes and technology for ideal customer-centric solutions' – and hosts 'audioconferences' which appear to be free. Coming up is an audioconference on 'Web Services - What's All The Fuss About?' and a useful regular session on 'Getting the Most Out of Gartner.com'.

Research and Pricing
The core product of both IDC and Gartner is research reports and bulletins.

One typical IDC report on 'Western European Professional Services Applications Market Forecast and Analysis, 2002–2006' runs to twenty-three pages (with twelve tables and four figures) and sells for US $2,500. An abstract of about 900 words (with two figures) is available free on site. An IDC report of sixty-one pages on 'Worldwide Business Process Outsourcing Forecast and Analysis, 2002–2006' sells for US $5,500, though the abstract for this is only about 600 words. Other articles have even shorter abstracts, or even none at all; it seems a lot to ask someone to pay US $2,000 or more for an article on the basis of its title and author alone.

To check the research, I searched IDC for articles on a topic I know a little about – the ongoing saga of electronic books. Three items appeared, with the latest dated December 2000. One was a press release, which made some wildly over-optimistic predictions about the rise of ebooks in 2002. The second was a 33-page report on which the press release was presumably based; but the abstract was very coy about its contents and, not having a spare US $4,500, I decided to forego reading the article. The third was a US $2,500 bulletin from October 1999 titled 'eBooks: Roadrunners on the Information Highway or Road Kill?' which – judging from the title anyway – seemed to sum things up a little more accurately; but here again the abstract was very short on details.

Gartner reports fall into a wider price range, starting at US $95, and there are many free reports, usually brief, which seem to play the same role as IDC's press releases. Ebook coverage here was more up to date, extending to a brief article from February 2002 called 'E-Books: Critical Changes for Any Success', which provided a pungent quote: 'The e-book cannot continue in its present form'. Articles could be read on screen or downloaded as PDF files. I couldn't find any indication of the size or depth of the articles that were available for purchase, and the abstracts that were shown only ran to a couple of sentences.

Relevance to Australia and New Zealand
Both sites provide some coverage of local issues, with two to three Australian articles appearing on each site every month. A search of IDC for all titles including 'Australia' yielded 68 results, and 'New Zealand' gave 32; the corresponding figures for Gartner were 123 and 45. I have listed the most recent articles for each country below, with their size and cost.

Title	Type	Pages·	Site	Cost ($US)
Australia IT Spending and Industry Segmentation, 2000–2006	Report	73	IDC	2000
Profiles of Five Noteworthy Local Solutions Integrators in Australia	Bulletin	23	IDC	1500
Australia's Participation in the Information Society	Bulletin	9	IDC	1250
Customer Relationship Management Software Market Picks Up	Research Press			
Steam in Australia, According to IDC	Release		IDC	
Australia Cellular Services Market Analysis and Forecast, 2001–2006	Report	25	IDC	2500
Mobile Infrastructure Revenue, 1997-2006: Australia			Gartner	1495
Australia: Optical Transmission Market, 1997-2006			Gartner	1495
Australia: 2002 IT Services Overview (Executive Summary)			Gartner	195
Australia: 2001 IT Services Overview			Gartner	1295
Telecom Unit Pricing in Australia: Every Which Way but Up			Gartner	95
New Zealand IT Spending and Industry Segmentation, 2000–2006	Report	73	IDC	2000
New Zealand IT Solutions Market: A Competitive Analysis	Bulletin	18	IDC	2500
Local Heroes – Profiles on Five New Zealand Service Providers	Bulletin	33	IDC	3500
New Zealand Printer Market Review and Forecast, 2001–2006	Report	55	IDC	3500
Captive Market Outsourcing Case Studies – New Zealand	Bulletin	25	IDC	1500
Mobile Infrastructure Revenue, 1997-2006: New Zealand			Gartner	1495
New Zealand: Optical Transmission Market, 1997-2006			Gartner	1495
Mobile Terminals: New Zealand, 1997-2006			Gartner	1495
Accenture Closes New Zealand Office			Gartner	95
Fixed Public Network Services Trends in New Zealand, 2000-2006			Gartner	1495

Conclusion

The demand for IT research over the Internet is obviously substantial and well-heeled! Both IDC and Gartner have large and well-maintained sites, which tend to cover the same topic areas. For free information the IDC press releases appear to have more substance than the occasional free Gartner report, but the bottom end of the Gartner price range is well below the bottom end of the priced IDC bulletins.

Both sites are readily searchable, though users will need to be alert to spelling variants. Both could be improved in presentation; IDC by cutting down the page width and Gartner by reducing the number of pop-up windows. It would also help uncertain users if Gartner would indicate the length of its reports for purchase.

Jonathan Jermey is an independent author and indexer.

NET NOTE

NEW ARCHIVE ON JSTOR

JSTOR (http://www.jstor.org) stands for "journal storage" and is an electronic system designed to save shelf space in libraries by scanning complete runs of journals. Five complete JSTOR collections are currently available: Arts & Sciences I, General Science, Ecology & Botany, Business, and Language & Literature. The forthcoming Arts & Science II Collection has 75 journals available; this will increase to more than 100 journals. Collections in Art History, Music, Education, and Law are in the early stages of development.

JSTOR is dedicated to providing a trusted electronic archive of scholarly journals. To balance the interests of publishers, libraries and users, JSTOR does not offer access to the most recent issues of journals to insure that publisher interests are not undermined. However, JSTOR is developing a program that links back issues and more recent issues in a way that will make the experience for users as seamless as possible. For 13 titles common to JSTOR and Project MUSE, scholars are now able to search and browse the title, author and abstract information for articles in the recent issues, in addition to searching the full-text for the past articles in JSTOR. The service offers the ability to search and browse the complete runs of journals in a single location. In addition, users with a subscription to the journals in Project MUSE, either through their library or individually, are able to follow direct links to the full text articles available at Project MUSE.

The titles included in JSTOR are selected according to the following criteria:
* the number of institutional subscribers a journal has
* citation analysis
* recommendations from experts in the field
* the length of time that the journal has been published.

JSTOR's agreements with publishers include an updating provision referred to as a "moving wall." The moving wall is a fixed period of time ranging, in most cases, from 2 to 5 years, that defines the gap between the most recently published issue and the date of the most recent issues available in JSTOR. The purpose of the moving wall is to ensure that participants can rely on JSTOR to be the trusted archive for the journal backfiles, while also giving publishers some protection from the threat of lost revenues due to the availability of recent issues in the database.

The introduction of the Language & Literature Collection, comprising 47 journals, adds nearly 1.5 million pages to the JSTOR archive. The journals span the literary cultures of many countries and are in several languages. Institutions pay two fees in order to use the Collection: a one-off fee designed to ensure that JSTOR has the resources to meet its archival obligations in the future, and an annual access fee which goes towards the recurring costs of updating the archive, and the maintenance of support services for participating institutions. JSTOR's Arts & Sciences I and the Language & Literature Collections overlap in their content; this is reflected in the participating fees.

The following Australian organizations are participants in the JSTOR project:
* Australian National University
* Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)
* Monash University
* State Forests of New South Wales
* University of Melbourne
* University of New South Wales
* University of Queensland
* University of Sydney
* University of Western Australia

AUSTRALASIAN MEDICAL PUBLISHING COMPANY LTD

The Medical Directory of Australia on CD-ROM

The Medical Directory of Australia on CD-ROM contains profiles on 70,000 healthcare professionals: doctors, hospitals (public and private), healthcare facilities and institutions, pharmacies (retail and hospital), diagnostic services (radiology and pathology), colleges and associations, physiotherapists, dietitians, diabetes educators, and other healthcare organizations.

The product capabilities allow the user to attach notes on individual practitioners and healthcare institutions. The optional Professional Output Version permits the export of individual physician or organisational information to word processing. This capability is designed for individual correspondence and is not intended for use as a mass marketing tool.

IT INFORMATION SITES 2: BITPIPE AND IT PAPERS

by Jonathan Jermey

In my previous article, I described the content providers IDC and Gartner. Bitpipe (http://www.bitpipe.com) and IT Papers (http://www.itpapers.com) are different in that they don't generate and sell their own content, but provide access to content generated (and sometimes stored) elsewhere, particularly the relatively brief and descriptive reports known as Industry White Papers. Their revenue comes from the content providers who pay to have their materials listed, the sale of advertising on their sites (IT Papers), and the provision of content search and retrieval systems for LAN networks. IT Papers also offers its own White Paper writing service. There may be on-selling by IT Papers of users' e-mail addresses to interested parties, although this is not made clear. Much of the material available through both sites is free to the user.

Bitpipe was founded in 1998 in Boston. It describes itself as a syndicator and provides access to content from over 3,500 sources, incidentally including Gartner and IDC. IT Papers describes itself as 'the Yellow Pages of White Papers' and focuses on these. Bitpipe is laid out in a fairly conventional way and gives the impression of corporate responsibility; IT Papers has a younger feel, with darker colours and less formal language used throughout the site.

Home Page and Site Usability
The Bitpipe home page is fairly busy and took some time to load. There is a simple search field at the top of the page and the main section is divided into two clusters of text links, one to companies and one to topics. The layout has clearly been influenced by Yahoo's popular directory. On the left are long-term links aimed at vendors (Bitpipe Network), corporate customers (Bitpipe Services) and users (Bitpipe's Best), and down the right a panel with links to popular reports and White Papers. Unfortunately, the layout appears about 5 mm too wide on an 800 x 600 screen, requiring the user to scroll across to see the right margin.

The IT Papers home page fits comfortably across the screen and also provides Yahoo-style categorised links, this time clustered into topics only. On the left a simple search field allows for text searching, and a number appears with a running total of the number of White Pages available -- 29,589 at the date of writing.

Both sites make extensive use of JavaScript but, as far as I can tell, avoid frames. Both sites display an icon in the top

left, which returns the user to the home page: this seems to have become part of the 'language' of corporate sites on the Web. Text links on the Bitpipe site changed colour to indicate visited sites; those on IT Papers didn't. IT Papers used pop-up windows to display the contents of the White Papers; Bitpipe didn't. Bitpipe makes extensive use of cookies, appearing to send one per page; IT Papers appears to use only a few cookies on the site. Bitpipe makes sensible use of page titles, so that when pages are saved they appear with meaningful file names; pages from IT Papers are often given generic titles, making it difficult to distinguish between them when saved to disk.
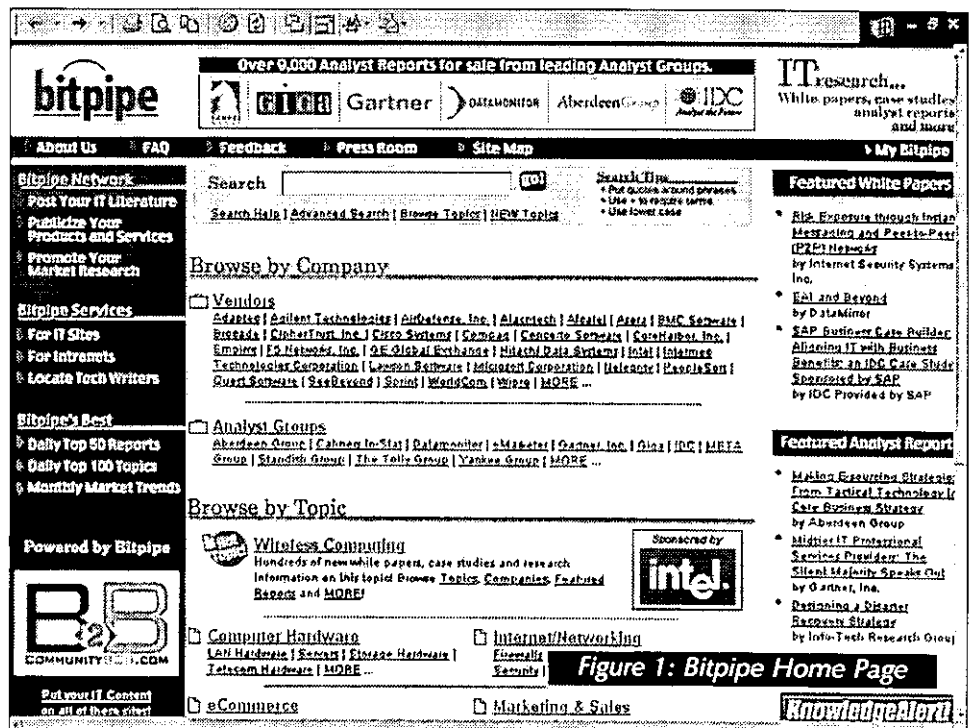

Figure 1: Bitpipe Home Page

Searching
The *quick search* on the Bitpipe screen brings up a tabbed panel grouping results into IT Reports, Analyst Research, Topics and Companies. A search on 'ebooks' yielded three items and a search for 'e-books' yielded nine, suggesting that no thesaurus is used for synonym mapping. Bitpipe also has an *advanced search* option which allows users to build a Boolean query based on document type, publisher type and price, as well as aspects of the title and content. This was rather unintuitive to use, but practice would probably make it easier.

A similar search on IT Papers yielded no items for 'ebooks' and over 40 items for 'e-books', but an examination of some of these revealed that they had no connection with e-books; what appeared to have happened was that the hyphen was ignored and an 'either-or' search was done on the component parts 'e' and 'books'. This has obvious drawbacks when searching for any of the many hyphenated terms in the IT lexicon. Adding quote marks did not

appear to change the search, and a search for 'electronic books' yielded yet more, different, papers.

Another concern with IT Papers was that several of the item links shown by a search were broken, suggesting that the papers had been removed from the Web by their content providers. One wonders how many of the 29,589 advertised papers are actually available.

IT Papers categorises search results on to separate Web pages, so that the user has to look at the results from each category in turn. Where there are many categories with a small number of papers in each, this adds considerably to the time taken to review the papers.
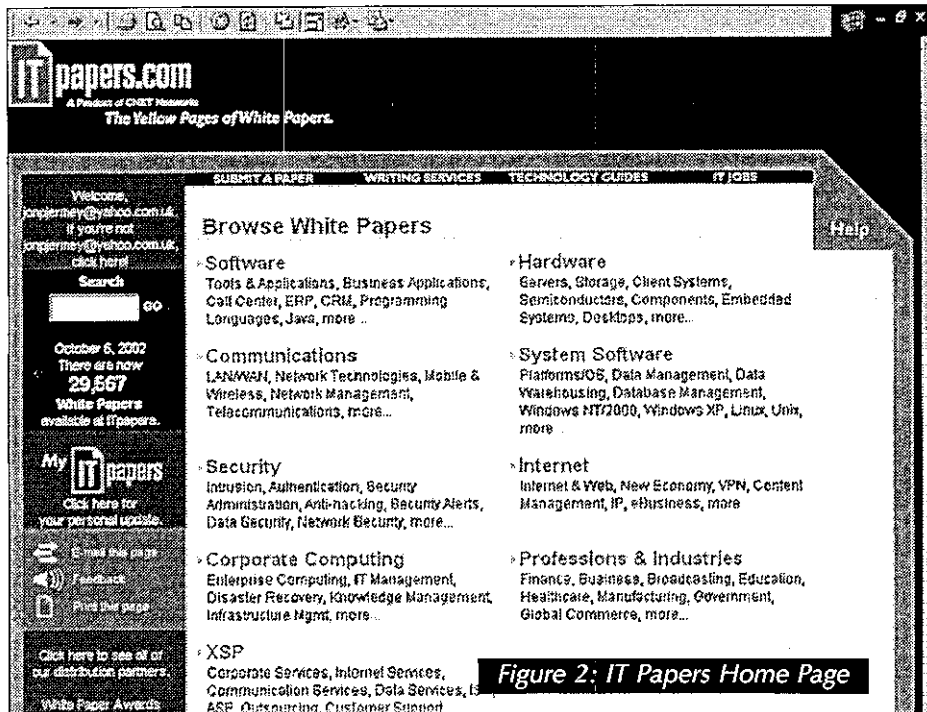

Figure 2: IT Papers Home Page

Pricing and Materials

All the material available through IT Papers appeared to be free to the user, although it was sometimes necessary to register with the content provider to access it, as it was stored on the provider's site. Bitpipe stores its paid material on their own system, avoiding the problem of broken links, and only link to other sites for free content. About half the number of items found through Bitmap were available for free, though the paid items tended, unsurprisingly, to be the longer ones.

Papers were provided in a variety of formats – the majority were in PDF (Adobe Acrobat), with some in HTML and a smattering in Microsoft Word format. HTML and Word formats can readily be saved on the user's own hard disk, but this is not always the case with PDF; see the item 'Beating the System' for a way around this.

One potentially useful feature of IT Papers is that users can write their own reviews of papers they have read, and other users can then access these. Unfortunately, nobody had taken up this option for the papers that I viewed. IT Papers also provide some content of their own in the form of several hundred free 'Technology Guides' of 10-15

pages (PDF format), which cover a range of industry topics (none on e-books, alas). The one I examined was a well-written and excellent introduction to its field.

Registration and Customisation

Users can register with either site by submitting their e-mail address and nominating a password. Registered users can compile their own collection of links to favourite articles. There is no purchasing directly from the sites; users are directed to the publisher's own site for purchasing.

Both sites run mailing lists; Bitpipe offers 'free email alerts' on IT research, while IT Papers provides specialised newsletters on particular topics. Registering for the IT Papers newsletters also authorises them to pass your address on to 'technology companies that produce products and services in your areas of interest' (junk mail alert!), so proceed with caution here.

Webcasts

IT Papers also provides many links to free pre-recorded 'Webcasts'. These are delivered through the Yahoo Webcast system and probably require a broadband connection; I was unable to download one through my dial-up system. As with the paper search, several of the advertised Webcasts appeared to have been taken off the Web since the links were made.

Relevance to Australia and New Zealand

A search of IT Papers for papers mentioning 'Australia' returned over 100 papers, with the largest number appearing in the category of 'Regulatory Agencies' (no surprises there). A similar search for 'New Zealand' turned up 15 papers of which 2 related to 'Seismology and Earthquakes'. 'Australia' appeared in 397 papers under Bitpipe, of which at least the first 75 in order of relevance were all paid (a coincidence?), and 'New Zealand' appeared in 132, of which the first 72 were paid.

Conclusion

IT Papers is an obvious place for the impecunious to start their quest for information, although the vagaries of the search system and the presence of broken links will undoubtedly cause some frustration over time, and users should be wary of offers to subscribe them to other services. Bitpipe is less visually attractive -- especially the annoyingly oversized pages -- and potentially much more expensive, but more reliable, especially for older materials.

See next page for the author's tips on 'Beating the System'

Jonathan Jermey is an independent indexer and author.

Beating the System
A few subversive tips to help you past obstructive technology.

1. Saving PDF Files to Disk

The papers provided by Bitpipe and IT Papers can be in any one of three formats – HTML, Word or PDF. Papers in HTML or Word can be saved directly to the user's hard disk through a File/Save command, but this option will not be available for PDF files unless the creator of the file has chosen to install it. How, then, can a PDF file displayed in your browser be conveniently saved to disk? If you got to the PDF file directly from a link on a Web page, then go back to the Web page and proceed from step 6 below. If not (e.g. if the click was handled by a JavaScript routine) you will need to make your own Web page as follows:

1. Use a text-editing program like Notepad to create a new text file called PDFLINKS.HTM. Save it on the Desktop so that it's handy.
2. Add the following line to the file:
   <A HREF=XXX>Right-click here</A>.
3. Go to your browser and select the URL of the PDF file. Press Ctrl-C to copy this to the Clipboard.
4. Paste this address into your Notepad file in place of the XXX.
5. Close Notepad and save the PDFLINKS.HTM file. Now double-click on the icon for that file to open it in a browser window. The words 'Right-click here' will appear as a link, in blue with an underline.
6. Right-click on the link and select 'Save Target As' from the menu that appears. Specify the location that you want to store the PDF file at.

Once you have created the PDFLINKS file you can re-use it any time you need a right-clickable link to a PDF document (or anything else); just call it up in the browser and use View/Source to edit the Notepad text version. Don't forget to refresh the browser view after saving your changes to the text!

2. Web Pages That Don't Want to be Saved

Most Web pages can be saved directly to the user's hard disk, but occasionally Microsoft Internet Explorer users encounter pages which the browser can't or won't save –

very irritating when you want to take the files home to read off-line, or pass them on through the network to one's colleagues. The Forrester site (**http://www. forrester.com**), for instance, seems to be made up almost entirely of these.

Luckily, not all browsers have the same scruples. I haven't tried Netscape, but the free (advertising-funded) browser Opera will save these pages without difficulty. You can find and download Opera at **http://www. downloads.com**; it's about 3.5 MB and it should self-install with no difficulty. Just run Opera, point it at the same pages and select either 'File/Save As' or 'File/Save With Images As'. These pages are often generated on the fly from database contents, and lack meaningful titles, so you may have to provide these as well.

3. Setting Your Own Format for Web Viewing

If the designer's choice of colours or fonts for a particular Web site is driving you up the wall, or if you simply want to restore lost functionality like different colours for 'visited' links, you can override site format settings with the Microsoft Internet Explorer. Choose 'Tools/Internet Options/General/Accessibility' and turn on the three 'Ignore' options at the top, and any Web pages you view from then onwards will have your browser's standard default fonts and colours. (You can modify these as well if you want to, through 'Tools/Options/General/Colours' and 'Tools/Options/General/Fonts'.) The Opera browser allows even more extensive customisation through the File/Preferences menu.

4. Registration Addresses

Rather than giving out your 'real' email address when registering with sites like IT Papers, set up a free email account with Hotmail (**http://www.hotmail.com**), Yahoo (**http://mail.yahoo.com**), or the like and give this address instead. This 'registration address' can be checked every few weeks or so for genuine correspondence, and any junk that arrives there can be left to pile up without interfering with your real e-mail system. The host may even filter it out and/or delete it after a fixed period of time.

NET NOTE

ONLINE CONTENT MARKET FROM IDC

Aggregate spending for online content will surpass US $50 billion worldwide this year and is expected to surpass US $108 billion by 2006. To help online content buyers and providers understand the changes this market will undergo over the next few years, IDC (http://www.idc.com) has launched a new Continuous Intelligence Service (CIS) -- *Online Content Market: Technologies and Strategies*. The IDC service will analyse the market from several perspectives, including content types, technologies, services and providers, using primary research on user demand and in-depth technology assessments. The service will cover issues such as:

- Buying intentions and brand awareness of online content buyers
- Trends in pricing and delivery methods
- Content management, access and delivery technologies
- XML content technologies
- Digital rights management for online content

IDC will examine the strategies, market position and future direction of major vendors and service providers in the online content market. It will offer, as part of the CIS, a series of advisory workshops on XML, partnering strategies, usability and other online content-related issues.

IT INFORMATION SITES 3: IDG AND FORRESTER

by Jonathan Jermey

IDG is the parent company of IDC, discussed in the first article in this series (Online Currents, November 2002) and it provides access to research material via that subsidiary (which it refers to rather unflatteringly as 'the store'). IDG advertises itself as 'the world's leading technology media, research and event company'. It has more than 12,000 employees worldwide, most of whom, I suspect, would be involved in its global publishing efforts. Unlike the other sites discussed in this series, IDG has a strong presence in paper-based magazine publishing. In Australia alone it offers the following publications: *CIO Government Review – Australia, Computerworld Australia, Australian Macworld, Australian PC World, Australian Biotechnology News, Channel X Australia, Information Age – Australia, CIO Australia* and *Australian Reseller News*. Like most of the other sites, it also offers access to events and conferences, plus education and training. Many readers would be familiar with the 'Dummies' series of books produced by IDG.

inability of Microsoft Internet Explorer to save its pages; it goes through the motions of saving then pops up an 'unable to save' message. Whatever secret code is preventing Internet Explorer from doing this, it has no apparent effect on the Opera browser (available free from http://www.opera.com), which will save Forrester pages quite happily.

Figure 1: IDG Home Page

Forrester is a research provider with a somewhat broader scope than the others in this series, covering other fields of technology beyond IT. It provides research papers for prices ranging from US $50 (for a one page brief) to US $450 (for a nineteen-page report) and beyond. Some free material, mostly in the form of excerpts from larger reports, is made available on the site to users who register as 'guests' - a fairly simple process requiring the user to provide a name, address and e-mail address.

Home Page and Site Usability

Both sites are fairly attractive. IDG opts for black text on a white background with a red-and-black banner across the top. The home page is divided into three columns, with the central column providing up-to-date information and the right-hand column allowing for searches by region or product line. Forrester is more earthy, with greens and khakis, a short navigation menu at the left and links to research topics at the right. Both sites make their pages slightly wider than 800 pixels, meaning the user has to scroll back and forth to see the whole of the display. One severe frustration with the Forrester site is the
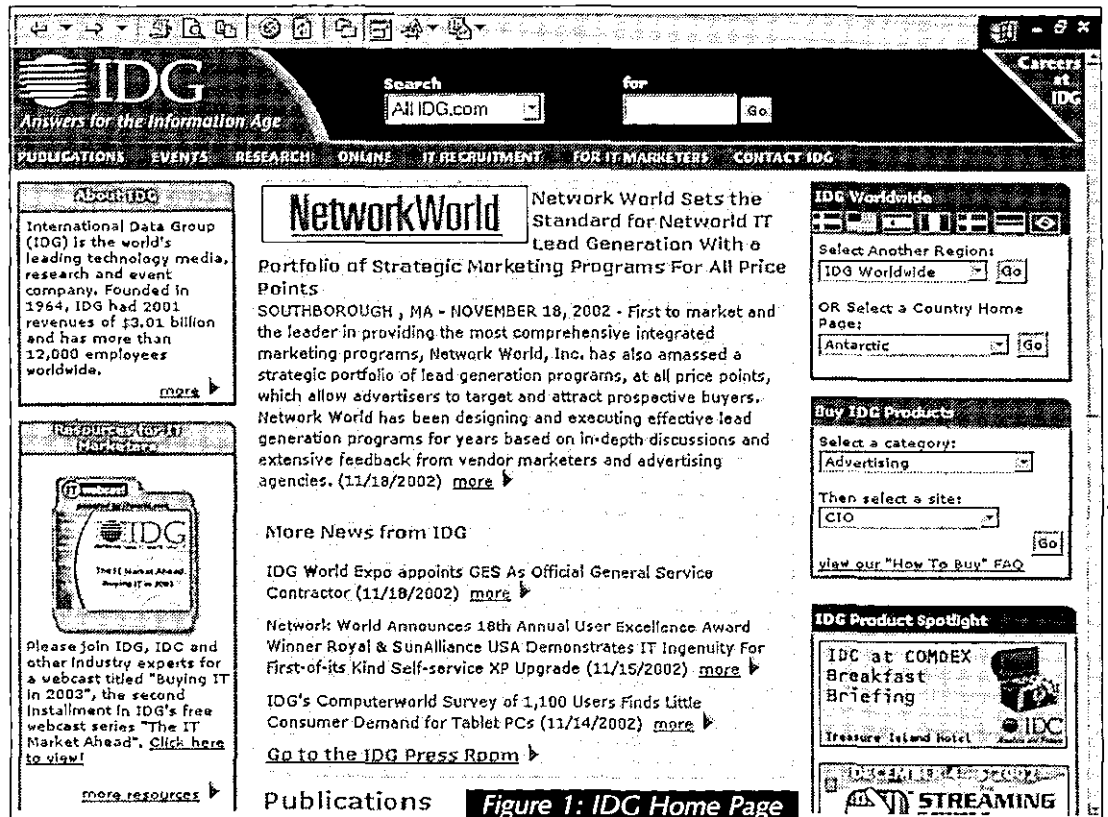
Searching

Both sites have a text-based search field available on all pages; IDG places it at the centre top and Forrester at the left. IDG can be searched for particular publications, events, press clippings or FAQ; a 'Contact IDG' option is also lurking here, rather oddly placed in a drop-down list of searchable categories. The IDG search is powered by Google.

A search of Forrester research for 'ebooks' yielded 15 items. Searching for 'e-books' produced the same list, indicating that some sort of semantic or lexical analysis of search terms is taking place; this was conspicuously lacking in some of the other information sites. Clicking on an individual item produced a brief abstract of that article, with the option to buy it; none of the search result items was available for free. Like Google, the Forrester search provides a 'relevancy' ranking for its hits; it was interesting to note that even the most relevant paper on ebooks (*Print On-Demand And Digital Textbooks Dominate eBooks*) only scored 69%. A Forrester search for 'Australia' yielded 50 results, with a maximum relevancy of only 15% (*eGovernment: Will The Bulldog Learn New Tricks?*, which was actually concerned with the UK government). There were no articles specifically

about Australia or New Zealand, suggesting that Forrester is not the place to go for local material.

Other Services

Both sites have free newsletters they will send to registered users. IDG runs Web casts, presentations and conferences; Forrester limits itself to research articles. Forrester, however, covers a broader range of technology, extending beyond IT to the automotive, healthcare and travel industries, among others.

Conclusion

IDG provides a gateway to a genuinely global publishing empire; most users approaching the site will find themselves shunted towards one of its many subsidiaries such as IDC, each with their own Web sites. Forrester is a 'mainstream' research provider, which shows a good deal of clever thought and planning, but using

Figure 2: Forrester Home Page

Forrester can be frustrating, due to the difficulty in saving pages.

Jonathan Jermey is an independent indexer and author.

DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT TEMPLATES

A Sydney company, Backup Technical Writing, has launched a new Web-based service, docDownload (http://www.docDownload.com.au), which aims to provide subscribers with any document template they may need. Documents ready to be downloaded from the site include:

- Those necessary to set up a company, incorporated association or cooperative
- Business taxation expense sheets, recruitment forms and employment contracts
- Planning and risk control reports
- Legal documents, including civil litigation, family law and will precedents
- Resumes for advertised positions
- IT control documents, e.g. user acceptance testing

The annual subscription fee for the service ranges from $365.00 for individual subscribers to $1,560.00 for a 6 user corporate licence. Licences for larger user groups are available on application. Document templates not currently available at docDownload, will be produced at no extra cost, should they be required by subscribers. The templates have been prepared by technical writers, barristers and solicitors to provide a range of documents that have a good understanding of the Australian legal, accounting and administrative environment.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION ADVICE FROM GOOGLE

Google, the very popular search engine, has recently published some advice on the value of search engine optimisation to its users and users of all search engines. The advice includes the following:

- Beware of offers to guarantee rankings on a search engine, or claims of the existence of a special relationship with a search engine. The only way to submit a site to Google directly is via http://www.google.com/addurl.html. This is free.

- Beware of Search Engine Optimizers (SEOs) who offer link popularity schemes, or offer to submit a site to thousands of search engines. These are often useless exercises which do not affect ranking in the results of the major search engines.
- Proposals to allow keywords to be typed directly into the browser address bar often require the installation of extra software.
- Some SEOs may promise to obtain high ranking with a search engine, but obtain the placing in the advertising section of the engine rather than in the search results.