News on the Web – drowning in information

Sue Childs   sue.childs@northumbria.ac.uk
Editor of He@lth Information on the Internet

Through techniques such as daily e-mail alerts many people are feeling swamped by this sea of news. Web technology is highly suitable for providing news. Initiatives such as NHS What's New, are therefore crucial as they attempt to manage the wealth of resources available and decrease information overload. Targeted news can be 'pushed' at customers.

Web technology is highly suitable for providing news. New items can be immediately placed on the site as soon as the story breaks. And targeted news can be 'pushed' at customers through techniques such as daily e-mail alerts. Many organisations from all sectors, commercial and public, have taken advantage of

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these capabilities, with the result that people can end up drowned in this sea of news. Initiatives such as NHS What's New, described in the previous article, are therefore crucial as they attempt to manage the wealth of resources available and decrease information overload.

This article discusses some news sites to provide a feel for the types of services available; however, it is only scratching the surface.

Traditional media are well represented on the Web. The Big Project UK portal <http://www.thebigproject.co.uk/news/> gives links to UK TV and news agencies and national and regional newspapers, as well as international sites with English versions.

The BBC News is a good example of a TV news site <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/>. It offers a range of value added services: 'Daily E-mail' where you can register for customised e-mail digests; 'News Ticker' where you can have automatically updated news sent direct to your desktop; 'News for PDA' where news can be download onto your PDA. Subject specific news is also available, e.g. BBC News Health

at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/health/default.stm>.

The Guardian newspaper is an example of a newspaper Web site, Guardian Unlimited at <http://www.guardian.co.uk>. It offers the following value added services: 'Readers' editor' a channel for comments and complaints; 'Text alerts and PDA' for news sent to your mobile or downloaded to your PDA; 'Email services' for a range of daily and weekly alerts; 'Headlines for your site' for displaying content on your own Web site (free to non-commercial users). A section providing health-related news is also available <http://www.society.guardian.co.uk/health/>. Important issues are given more coverage. At the time of writing this article (18 March 2002) this included 'The NHS plan' and 'NHS quality and performance'.

Internet companies have also taken on the provision of news. 'Yahoo! News' is a good example <http://dailynews.yahoo.com>. Once again, value-added services are

NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination. They locate and systematically examine the evidence behind the headlines.

available, which are free though you have to register: 'Yahoo! Mobile' where news is sent to your pager, PDA or mobile; 'News Alerts' for customised news; 'News Bulletins' where you receive news by e-mail. There is a Health news sector with

specific sections covering important or topical news areas, as well as full coverage of general health news. At the time of writing, 'Cancer' and 'Heart Disease & Circulatory Disorders' were featured; clearly of interest for work on NSFs.

There are also sites specialising in health news. Health-news.co.uk <http://www.health-news.co.uk/> is provided by the Health Media Group, a company providing information, education and technology services in the health field. Health-news.co.uk is a free service but users have to register. Reuters Health offers a number of services. 'Reuters health eLine' <http://www.reutershealth.com/frame/eline.html> is a news service focusing on health stories aimed at the consumer. 'Reuters Medical News' <http://www.reutershealth.com/frame2/med.html> is aimed at the health professional. A subscription service (to individuals or organisations) is available, providing access to archived stories. However searching the archive or browsing news headlines is free.

Being directed to news stories in the health field is only the first step to dealing with information overload. The next step is for items to be prioritised, summarised and placed into context.

The National electronic Library for Health (NeLH) <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/> provides the 'Hitting the Headlines' service, produced by

staff from the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination. The locate and systematically examine the evidence behind the headlines. Unbiased, brief and readable summaries appraising the research evidence are posted on the NeLH website within 48 hours of

following information is given, where available: Headline, Newspaper article synopsis, Newspaper article source, Article mentions, Journal article citations. Are there any UK equivalents? The Department of Health (DoH)

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'Biomedicine and Health in the News' <http://library.uchc.edu/bhn/> is an interesting service provided by the Lyman Maynard Stowe Library, at the University of Connecticut Health Center in the US. The Web site provides 'quick access to the biomedical, scientific and health journal literature referenced in newspaper articles appearing in the *New York Times*. Newspaper articles that announce new research findings and refer to current or forthcoming publication are given highest priority. Unpublished research reported at professional meetings is also included.' For each item, the

provides a number of bulletins aimed at specific groups of health care staff alerting them to relevant, targeted DoH publications and announcements. As well as being sent direct to individuals, these bulletins are also placed up on the Web <http://www.doh.gov.uk/publications/bulletins.htm>. The best known example is the 'Chief Executive Bulletin' <http://www.doh.gov.uk/publications/cebulletin.html> sent to NHS and Council chief executives and directors of social services. The other available bulletins are:
HR Bulletin, GP Bulletin, Medical Directors Bulletin, Allied Health Professions Bulletin, Chief Nursing Officer Bulletin, Chief Dental Officer's Digest.

News items

Gambling on the Internet is addictive

A recent BBC news story <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/health/newsid_1872000/1872731.stm> has reported on research into Internet gambling. Staff from the University of Connecticut Health Center studied gambling behaviour in 389 people. Only ~8% gambled regularly on the Internet. However, these individuals had the most severe gambling addiction. Use of Internet gambling is likely to be on the increase as the Web becomes more and more accessible.

Reference
Ladd G, Petry NM. Disordered gambling among university-based medical and dental patients: a focus on Internet gambling. *Psychol Addict Behav* 2002; In press.

Use of the Internet in the US

Pew Internet and American Life Project have published their latest Internet Project report *Getting Serious Online* <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=55>. 'The status of the Internet is shifting from being the dazzling new thing to being a pur-poseful tool that Americans use to help them with some of life's important tasks'. Activities classed as information seeking have grown slowly. Only older people have markedly increased such use. Searching for health care inform-ation is still one of the most popular information seeking activities for people new to the Web. However, not all newcomers search for heath inform-ation; perhaps they did not have a medical problem during the survey period which would trigger off such a need. The report is available in html and pdf formats.

News item

2001 Search Engine Watch Awards

The Search Engine Watch Awards recognise outstanding achievements in Web searching <http://www.searchenginewatch.com/awards/2001-winners.html>