

Research Online for www.FutureskillsScotland.org.uk

Introduction

In early 2003 IDOX Information Services was awarded a contract to build and maintain an online portal of labour market intelligence for Futureskills Scotland. The portal, called Research Online, has been live since November 2003 and offers free access to details of over 6,000 articles and reports, the majority of which are available for full-text download.

Futureskills Scotland is part of the Scottish Government. One of their aims is to improve the availability of labour market information and intelligence across Scotland. Research Online provides free and user-friendly access to research, statistics, analysis and sectoral and geographic profiles on a range of labour market topics including employment, skills, migration, equal opportunities and entrepreneurship. It was created to act as a single, authoritative source of labour market material. Although Research Online focuses on Scotland, it includes material from elsewhere that provides insight relevant to Scottish labour market issues. Much of the material focuses on the UK as a whole.

Development process

The database itself is based on the company's award-winning IDOX product, and customised search technology. The search screen has been designed to be user friendly and does not assume specialist subject knowledge.

The database offers two search facilities:

- Browse by theme: for users interested in particular topics
- Search: a text-based searching facility with optional advanced mechanisms for more detailed exploration of the material.

Options include limiting results by date of publication onto the site and the ability to search within material relevant to a specific industrial sector or region.

IDOX information specialists produced an information model identifying the key subject areas and topics for the database. We then developed a taxonomy to form the basis of the 'browse by theme' search facility. Six themes were identified:

- learning and skills
- labour market overview
- demographics
- employment
- labour demand
- unemployment and inactivity

All of these themes are broken down into further topics. For example, 'unemployment and inactivity' involves barriers to employment, helping people into work, and benefits and taxation. Important cross-cutting issues were also identified: industrial sectors, social groups and regions. These cross cutting issues feature in the 'advanced search' facility, for example, allowing users to limit their search to particular social groups. Providing the taxonomy and advanced search options has helped ensure that users can locate and retrieve the information they require as easily as possible.

Site content

Research Online features full bibliographic details and abstracts written by a team of experienced IDOX information professionals. Much of the material is sourced from our own database. We source material in several ways, including the regular searching of government websites and by going through each issue of around 400 journals and periodicals. This allows us to find material which is current, relevant and comes from a range of sources, from formally published reports and journal articles to 'grey' literature.



Case Study

Additional sources of material for Research Online include:

- Futureskills Scotland's own research reports
- Over 100 websites, both national and international, that we regularly scan for suitable content
- A number of 'key' organisations who send their research direct to us for inclusion on Research Online. These include Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and a number of Sector Skills Councils.

Research Online provides three levels of access to material: abstract only, abstract with web link, and abstract with full text. We provide access to the full text of the document wherever possible and have permission to make available material from the Scottish and UK governments and a number of research organisations such as the Institute for Employment Studies, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Centre for Economic Performance.

Performance

Research Online currently holds over 6,000 records, around three quarters of which provide full text or links online for immediate access. Between 50 and 100 items are added every month. We update the site on a daily basis to ensure that new material is available as soon as possible.

Since its launch in November 2003, Research Online has been searched more than 80,000 times. The site usually attracts over 1,000 unique visitors each month.

IDOX group has helped Futureskills fulfil one of its main objectives by providing policy makers and researchers with rapid and free access to an authoritative source of labour market research and analysis. Research Online illustrates the unique service which we can offer combining technical skills and information management expertise to produce an efficient and effective information resource tool.

“We’re extremely pleased with the work IDOX group has done with Research Online – the feedback we have had has been universally positive.”

Dr Patrick Watt, Futureskills Scotland

Improvement

In 2007, IDOX group won a three year contract to review, update and manage Research Online. We made improvements to the appearance and functionality of the site. New features included a homepage containing links to headline documents, a function to allow users to build up a reading list of material and a mailing list to alert users to new material.

If you would like to discuss how we might help you or would like further information, please contact: marketing@IDOXgroup.com or call 0870 333 7101

www.IDOXgroup.com

Case Study