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The KIT — Knowledge & Information Technology

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→ Reader Feedback

Rick Warren (RTI) replied to my Cutter blog post titled "Visualize This!", summarized in the last issue of The KIT, noting that in the "Periodic Table of Visualization Methods" he "didn't see the work of Hans Rosling and [Gapminder](#). I wonder if you've seen some of their [novel visualization methods](#)?" Thanks for the pointer, Rick!

→ Is Wave... the Next Wave?

The world (even the [BBC](#)) is abuzz again about **Google Wave**, the latest brainchild of the Google Maps **creators**. Think of an Instant Messaging program that adds persistence when people go offline (so it can displace email), can save a conversation log as a wiki page, lets you see others type in real-time (so you can answer before they finish the question, but you can turn this off if it annoys you) and other assorted features. So in fact, something that starts as an IM chat could seamlessly morph into a jointly written paper with rich text, pictures, change tracking, etc., without ever having to change tools.

Wave is in "limited" release -- *only* one million people so far -- and is spreading by viral invitations. Until general release in early 2010, expect to hear about "Wave envy" from people who have not yet been invited to try it. And of course, it works with Chrome but not directly in IE... unless you add the Chrome Frame, which (of course too) Microsoft claims is a security risk!

→ A "Burnt Orange" Supercomputer?

Austinites will understand the reference to the colors of UT, and to make things even clearer, the project is named Longhorn. A \$7 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC) is aimed to deliver unprecedented capabilities for interactive visualization and data analysis to the open science community. Read the [full article](#).

→ Crowdsourcing

The [Wiktionary](#) defines *crowdsourcing* as "delegating a task to a large diffuse group, usually without monetary compensation." In fact, the term has come to mean something more positive, which is a community-based effort to gather resources or knowledge. In the KM arena, the phenomenon is seen as a double-edged sword:

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- on the one hand, it is often a way to gather much more input than a single person or team could possibly handle, or even just know about;
- on the other hand, the input may be of uneven quality, compared to what certified experts might provide.

So if someone asks "should we crowdsource this?" the proverbial consultant's answer may apply: "It depends." Look at the subject and ask yourself if you have access to the right experts, or if the knowledge you're trying to amass is likely to be diffused through a large audience. In the latter case, may the "wisdom of crowds" be with you! And even if you don't pay the crowd directly, give people a way to be rewarded for their contributions.

→ Things I Learned about Email Marketing

I attended a lunch seminar given by ConstantContact in Austin on Sep. 25. My expectations were relatively low, but I was pleasantly surprised. The speaker was excellent, her talk wasn't just about how good their product is, and I learned something. For example:

- An industry statistic is that every dollar spent on email marketing brings \$87 in additional revenue.
- The average "open rate" for emails sent through Constant Contact in the U.S. is 32%. In Texas, it's 29% -- they didn't say why, but offered as a consolation that Oklahoma has a lower percentage.
- The best days and times to send marketing emails is on Tuesday or Wednesday between 10:00 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- People respond better to the color red (phew!)

→ The Design of "Mediated Social Spaces"

"Huh?" you said? Some of the MIT Media Lab's project names may sound very esoteric, but I find the work of PhD student [Drew Harry](#) quite compelling. His advanced ways to mix the real and virtual worlds will probably be commonplace 20 years from now.

Prior to the MIT Media Lab, Drew worked at the research labs of IBM and Motorola. He founded [Thinkature](#), a start-up that developed real-time, thin-client collaboration using a shared white board with a tool box for idea mapping, and voice chat.

→ Seen Recently...

"It doesn't matter whether we 'accept' folksonomies, because we're not going to be given that choice. The mass amateurization of publishing means the mass amateurization of cataloging is a forced move."

-- Clay Shirky, introducing himself on www.tagsonomy.com in April 2005 (!)