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## Conference Feature: Making Sense of 'Stuff'

The Internet is just 'People doing stuff with stuff', according to Matt Rhodes, Director of Client Services at FreshNetworks. Features Editor Teresa Lynch spent Thursday huddled with the alchemists hoping to turn it into insight, at the one day conference of the UK's ASC.

The conference was entitled *Embracing the Social Media Revolution: Using New Technologies in the Research Process*. The ASC (Association for Survey Computing) would be the first to put their hands up to acknowledge that in the past they have presented papers which were remarkable mainly for the whooshing noise they made as they flew over the heads of a large proportion of the audience. This time, however, the speakers were user friendly and very engaging.

As we all sat nostalgically in a lecture theatre in Imperial College, the morning session kicked off with an audio visual treat from Bruce Daisley, Head of Sales for YouTube. As well as using his access to unlimited amusing clips to his advantage he also bombarded us with notable statistics: for example, every minute, 24 hours worth of viewable content is uploaded onto their site; and the average iPhone owner views three clips a day on the device, while the average Android owner views eight. Bruce also made the point that the Internet has 'a long memory' and that advertising campaigns can no longer be targeted in time periods or regions. Another topic he covered turned into something of a motif for the day: the use of twitter in predicting both potential sales and the outcome of elections.



Next, Mark Simon (pictured), UK Managing Director of Toluna, outlined their strategy of converting their panels from lists of individuals into participating and engaged members of an online community.

The morning was then punctuated by a quick run through the new triple-S validator ([www.triple-s.org](http://www.triple-s.org)) - it is a techie conference after all - and then moved onto a presentation by Tom De Ruyck of InSites Consulting who gave us the benefit of their 3 years and 1,000 groups worth of experience of conducting online focus groups. Matt Rhodes' caveats about using tools for social media monitoring just-because-we-can rounded off the morning.

The afternoon was somewhat more experimental, starting off with a panel of Ray Poynter (Future Place), Charlie Osmond (FreshNetworks), Tim Macer (Meaning) and Diego Meller (Ipsos Livra). Diego replaced Pat Molloy, one of several absent because of the volcano. The panel answered questions from the floor and discussed topics such as the changes in the lifespan of projects, copyright issues and ethics for market researchers.

We then had a demonstration by Webinar of HotGrinds Inc.'s web sensing and text analytics, conducted by Claude Vogel, one of their co-founders. HotGrinds trawl the web searching for mentions of products or ideas and then collate these into concept maps of user sentiment; they then produce dashboards for clients. The Webinar almost worked; it was quite hard to hear and watch in the lecture theatre set-up and I think the speaker would have got some questions (instead of a stony silence) at the end if the audience weren't a bit stunned by the experience.

Ray Poynter finished off with *Out with the old, in with the new!* and we were done. In all: a good mix of speakers and a feast of information for market research techies. A conference stuffed, one might say, with good stuff.

Web site: [www.asc.org.uk](http://www.asc.org.uk) .

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