

The best of *Bon Journal*

Monday 31 March 2003 <http://www.bonjournal.com>
Volume 2 Issue 3: Celebrating 4 years of analyticalQ

Four years ago, analyticalQ.com was launched in London on the eve of Ides of March. This issue chronicles the evolution of analyticalQ.com.

A platform for self-expression

In the corporate environment, you can't always say what's on your mind. In 1998, I felt a great need to express myself in ways that weren't possible in the company I was working for.

Self-expression is a fundamental human need. But not everyone has the platform or the know-how to do so. analyticalQ was born out of this need and the belief that human beings are expressive creatures. If denied self-expression, they soon become zombies and robots.

In pursuit of flexibility

The concept of flexibility was a subject of my doctoral research. It's appealing to anybody dealing with uncertainty in modern times. Yet it is elusive and almost illusory.

By flexibility, I mean having lots of choices, not having to commit or get locked in, and being able to do many things. This can easily lead to procrastination and the illusion of living in a world of possibilities. In reality, options expire while time travels along a one way street.

analyticalQ.com shows that people pursue flexibility in different ways.

A passion for world travel

I once wrote a poem about wanderlust, the travel bug that bit me while sleeping in my mother's womb as she travelled from Taiwan to Brunei where I was eventually born. Since then, I've been fascinated by the diversity of people, places, and cultures on this planet.

In my first job as a management consultant, I desperately wanted to travel like my colleagues. But my boss said that I had the wrong passport and therefore grounded me

to base camp in Singapore. I vowed then that I would do something about it, so that I could be mobile.

World travel doesn't mean travelling only between two cities. It means travelling the world, travelling around the world, and seeing all there is.

Free sheet music

The first section of analyticalQ.com was the music section. Armed with powerful music notation software, I was able to quickly copy my handwritten notes into the computer and then play back the midi sounds.

I learned that "free sheet music" was a phrase most commonly used by search engines. So it was important to title my music page as such. Also, I found that being linked to music directories was key to getting traffic.

After a few weeks of dedicated e-mails and reciprocal linking, I no longer needed to continue to promote this section. The traffic to this part of analyticalQ continues to top other sections.

Diary of Anne Ku

In late 1999, I visited the island of Okinawa where I had spent most of my childhood. By then, my family members had all departed as had most of my neighbours. However, some teachers remained. I told my music teacher Mr Hall about wanting to share my stories with other people. He suggested that I put them on my web site.

In March and April 2000, I went to Kenya to visit my friend Sue. Although she had shared an office with me at London Business School, I never really knew her. The three weeks of safari and living as a member of her household inspired me greatly.

Upon my return, I decided to start an online diary. I would write every single day and document my thoughts, feelings, and anything else that was meaningful.

First I had to talk about what the Queen Bee said. She was the only female boss I ever had in my entire career. And she said, "Do you think anybody would want to talk to you if you didn't work for us?"

I wanted to prove that I didn't have to work for a particular company to be heard. My goal was to regain my identity as an individual and not as a mere employee.

The discipline of writing everyday forced me to pay attention to the process of writing. It forced me to choose what was worth writing about, for 365 consecutive days.

Bon Journal

The Bon Journal began on the same day as the Diary of Anne Ku ended – 30th April 2001. It was also the day I discovered that I was allergic to my long haired ginger tom cat. It took a good part of a year before I was able to let him go.

I didn't want to feel pressured to writing every single day, now that I knew I was able to do it. So Bon Journal allowed me to write only when I felt like writing.

By writing about different things, I began to open different doors of analyticalQ to people with different interests. It takes only a few weeks for search engines like Google to register a new Bon Journal page. Suddenly relatively unknown pages in other parts of the web site become accessible!

Parody collection

With the fall of Enron came a lot of parodies about it. I spent a day creating the Enron parodies page. Before long, a New York Times reporter e-mailed me asking if he could use my material. I, of course, welcomed it, provided he mentioned analyticalQ.

A few weeks later, I discovered his article on their web site without any mention of analyticalQ. He claimed that he didn't have enough space to include the source where he got

most of his Enron parodies and jokes.

Published in a book

The only good thing about my neighbours from hell was my diary entry being selected for inclusion in the New Millennium English Workbook, intended for Russian students. Here it is: 21 May 2000

This morning as soon as I woke up, I instinctively started playing Schubert's sonatas. As I thundered happily on the powerful chord progressions, I wondered if my next-door neighbours, who get up late, would retaliate by cranking up their stereo later? I don't care. Ever since they moved in last August, my daily life has suffered.

All day yesterday, they had the television on full blast. What could possibly be so interesting to watch the entire day? Since there are three of them at times, it isn't unusual to hear their TV, stereo, radio, and what-not going on simultaneously. Sometimes there are huge arguments, shouts and blasphemies at three in the morning. Other times, hysterical, shrieking laughter. As the weather gets warmer, the sounds would blast out through their open windows. This means I would no longer be able to read peacefully in my garden.

I have tried to ask them kindly - at 1 am in the morning, in my bathrobe. I have knocked on their door several times in the early days. Initially they refused to answer. I have called and written to their estate agent. I have contacted the council, who simply asked me to keep a written record. Short of contacting the owners who are working abroad, what can I do?

Why can't they be like my other neighbours, quiet and considerate and helpful? Unless they are owners themselves, why should they be concerned about bothering me?

It is of no use to dwell on my helplessness. Instead, I look forward to pounding away at more exuberantly loud pieces: Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue,

Saint Saens Piano Concerto No. 2, Chopin's Piano Sonata in B minor, and best of all, Moussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition. I doubt anyone who smokes three packets of cigarettes a day and watches TV until 3 in the morning would be a connoisseur of classical music, especially lousy piano practice at 8 am.

Highlights from guestbook

Probably the most interesting part of analyticalQ.com is the guestbook.

Earliest recorded guestbook entry was from **a Korean conductor in New York City, 6 April 1999:**

You have an Asian ancestry either Chinese or Korean. You've studied in the US. Now, you live in London where you've studied for a doctorate program. You are fluent in at least two languages. You've seriously studied piano for a long time, but you found you had other talents too. You might actually have a degree in music. Your main job is related to management or administration, but you don't want to give up the musical part of your life. I am very impressed. I had no idea what you were talking about when I read your thesis. Flexibility thing interests me a great deal. Your recital programme looks really academic and well chosen.

About a year later, **a high school classmate** wrote:

Just visited your website. It is very nice. Just a bit overwhelming at first. I do like the fact that you have not forgotten about the people who still browse with modems and phone lines. I always hated really flashy-for-no-reason websites. Your pages have inspired me to start mapping out my own.

In September 2000, **an ex-colleague in Singapore** wrote:

Just want you to know that I enjoy surfing your website. Whenever I lunched in (like what I'm doing now), I will "tune in" to your site to read your diary, etc. for some entertainment. Well, I think this is really a good way to keep in touch with your friends!

It's nice to be remembered, even if vaguely from high school – March 2001:

We never "hung out" together or any thing like that but for whatever reason I do remember you a little. What I do remember about you is that you were very popular and very well liked. I don't remember if we had any classes together or not but I do remember we spoke a little and you were very nice to me, not many people were. Oh well life goes on. I don't know if I remember correctly or not but I think you played the organ at the church I went to. One part of me says it was you but then again the other part of me says it was not you

And it was this entry that prompted me to launch **Bon Journal**:

I wonder how you can mention the Diary of Anne Frank, an incredible testament to the courage of a race forced to live like animals under attack from a sadistic regime, in the same space as the Diary of Anne Ku, which is a list of everyday happenings with no particular point to make.

The juxtaposition reduces the struggle for life, something few young people in the west could understand, to the level of "today I saw a hill". I suppose it's like measuring the experience of sitting still for five minutes with being locked in a cupboard for three years.

The Internet is clogged up with personal sites explaining in abundant detail how someone bought their first handkerchief and I think all this technology and time could be put to better use somehow.

In February 2003, someone wrote about the topic of the next Le Bon Journal Newsletter:

I found your website by typing in "making personal decisions" on my search engine. I am plagued by the what if's and I don't want to regret anything.



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