Search

Chapter 5

Where Do You Look For Information?

- Where you should look depends on the kind of information

Look In The "Right" Place

- Dictionary/Thesaurus
  - http://www.m-w.com
  - http://www.dictionary.com
- Tax forms
- Movie reviews
  - http://www.imdb.com/
  - http://rottentomatoes.com/
- City statistics
  - http://www.city-data.com/
- Encyclopedia
  - http://www.wikipedia.org
- Videos
  - http://www.youtube.com
- Airline tickets
  - http://www.kayak.com/
  - http://southwest.com/
  - Individual airline websites
- Images
  - http://images.google.com/
- Maps
  - http://maps.google.com/
  - http://www.mapquest.com/
- Books
  - http://bestbookbuys.com

Search Engines

- No one organizes the information posted on the Web.
- Search engines (e.g., Yahoo! And Google) look around to find out what's out there and organize what they find.

How Search Engines Work

1. Web crawling
   - A web crawler visits sites on the Web following every link it sees.
   - The contents of each page are analyzed to determine how it should be indexed.
   - Data about web pages are stored in an index database for later use when processing user queries.
2. Query processing
   - When a user enters a query, the engine examines its index and provides a listing of the best-matching web pages.
   - What is the "best-matching" web page?
     - Ideally, it is the exact web page that you are looking for!
Google's PageRank

- The more links there are to a page, the more relevant it must be.
  - If page A links to page B, consider the link as a vote by page A for page B.

- Not all votes are equal
  - Google also looks at whether the page doing the "voting" is itself highly ranked.

Effective Web Searching

- Avoid questions
  - Does Australia have Target?  
    - australia target store
  - Be specific
    - java
      - java coffee
      - documentation on lasik eye surgery
      - lasik eye surgery
- ... but not too specific
  - Source: http://www.googleguide.com/select_terms.html

Effective Web Searching

- Use likely words
  - obama presidential inauguration speech transcript
  - obama inaugural address transcript
- Know the right terminology
  - cup holder won’t open
  - dvd drive won’t open
- Be brief
  - program on quitting tobacco cigarette smoking
  - quit smoking program
- Source: http://www.googleguide.com/select_terms.html

More Effective Web Searching

- Use quotes to find exact phrases
  - Example: "why would you have a superpower"
- Prefix words you do not want in the search results with a minus symbol
  - Example: windows -microsoft
- Search for pages that contain either search term by using the OR operator
  - Example: recycling steel OR iron

More Effective Web Searching

- Search pages on a particular website using site:
  - Example: scholarships site:washington.edu
- (Google only) Use the tilde (~) before a keyword to look for that word and its synonyms
  - Example: car insurance
- (Google Maps) Use the near keyword to find nearby locations
  - Example: restaurants near university of washington

Exercise

- Find contact information for your representatives.
- How long did it take the first person to cross the United States by car and in what year was it done?
Web Information: Truth Or Fiction?

- Save The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus
  - http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/

- Is the information you found online true?
  - Does it matter?
  - Depends on how crucial it is that the information be true
  - If you find out the information is false, will it adversely affect you or someone else?
  - How authoritative is the source?
  - Does the site include references? Do those check out?
  - Can the information be independently verified from other sources?

Debunking Hoaxes

- In e-mail lingo, "forward this email to everyone you know" means "do not forward this email."
- Snopes.com: Urban Legends Reference
  - http://www.snopes.com
- Museum Of Hoaxes
  - http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/
- "PLEASE don't forward hoax virus warnings", Linn Barringer, 11/18/2008

Searching For Online Retailers

- Sometimes lesser-known online retailers can offer the cheapest prices.
  - How do you know if some random retailer found online is reputable?
  - Search for online reviews
  - Check the Better Business Bureau: http://www.bbb.org
  - Use single-use credit card numbers

- How reliable are online reviews?

Searching For Online Retailers

- ResellerRatings.com
- BBB.org

- Get a second… third… fourth… fifth opinion.
  - Read reviewer comments. Do lots of research!

Making Information Find You

- A web feed (or news feed) lets authors syndicate (publish simultaneously) content automatically.

- Users subscribe to various feeds which can be read using a "feed reader" (or "news reader").

- The two main web feed formats are RSS* and Atom.

- Web feed icon:
  *RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication.