

Searching the Internet

Having written a few essays over the years, I have relied on the internet for a lot of the research, scrutinizing papers, publications, verifying and cross checking information. A historian friend recently wrote about a fascinating woman who maintains two unique websites, saying that she had done all her research on the internet. From the quality of her work he was thinking that she had access to archives from libraries, universities, collections, etc. This demonstrates that the internet can provide quality information for even the most rigorous researcher. This will be even more true as Alphabet (Google) gets closer, page by page, to digitizing all the world's books. Provided, of course, that one knows how to utilize the internet properly. When you are writing a book, or even a short essay, or hosting a website, you better be accurate with your facts. Unfortunately, that is not the case with 99% of the internet user population. Consider this as a primer on how to use the internet. One of my pet peeves is people passing on, ad infinitum, stories that are spurious, seemingly believing in their veracity. There are websites, such as Snopes and FactCheck, that can be used to verify accuracy. Often, I have been told, "I googled it." Write the key word on the search box and hit enter. Voila, all the information you would ever want. But do you know you can obtain more pinpoint information by using advanced search? Technically, it is called Boolean search. This allows you to use qualifiers such as "and," "or," specify exact phrases, excluding others, pinpointing the language, country or countries, etc. The link is https://www.google.com/advanced_search.

Let's have an example of how this works. If I "google" my surname, there are 410,000 hits. By the way, I can remember, early on, when I would get only 1/100 of this number of hits. If I use an advanced search, using a combination of words and excluding some terms, the number of hits is drastically reduced, down to 25. The first four all relate to our family website of orosa.org. Ok, I stacked the deck, but using advanced search gets to the heart of the subject a lot quicker. You aren't really going to check those hundreds of thousands or millions of hits, are you? Likewise, you can use the advanced search to look for images or pictures using the same qualifiers. Do you also know that an image can be used to search, instead of a word or phrase? Upload an image, and Google will tell you what it is. I once used it to identify a strange looking fruit from the backyard of our daughter in Florida.

There are various other tips to make your search more productive. A guide listing no less than 31 advanced Google search tips is available at: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/1264/12-Quick-Tips-To-Search-Google-Like-An-Expert.aspx>.

Did you know that Google has an algorithm that prioritizes search results? It is a closely guarded company secret. There are companies that purport to optimize your website such that it will appear higher on Google's algorithm. We can't influence the algorithm, but we can have a better search strategy.

Here's one Google site that hardly anyone knows about. That's <https://scholar.google.com/>. You can use this to search patents, scientific articles and court cases. Curious about the patents of someone you know or those of Thomas Edison or Nikola Tesla? Check them out on

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scholar.google. Likewise, you can read the opinion of all the supreme court judges regarding Obergefell vs. Hodges (recognizing same sex marriage). In researching for an essay, I found the opinion, written by Oliver Wendell Holmes more than 100 years ago, regarding some Igorot aboriginal ancestral lands in the Philippines.

Do you have a science question? <https://www.wolframalpha.com/> gets you straight to the point. If you want to brush up on Newton's Laws and the Laws of Thermodynamics, Wolframalpha is the site to use.

The people's choice for information is none other than Wikipedia. But if you really want a comprehensive, scholarly discussion, first try www.britannica.com. That's the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which lives on in an online version. EB's iconic print edition breathed its last four years ago, (I once owned a 26 volume set fifty years ago, which cost me about a month's salary) after a run of more than 240 years. Take a few minutes and compare Wikipedia's discussion of "global warming" with EB's. You could build a college course from Encyclopaedia Britannica's discussion.

Perhaps you are tired of Google. Take heart, there are a lot of alternatives out there. One of my favorites is www.duckduckgo.com. In contrast with Google, it doesn't track your searches. Again using my sample search on "global warming," compare Google vs. Duckduckgo results. I believe the latter's results are cleaner and more relevant. Besides, why do I need Google's 57 million hits? Can't they cut it off at a reasonable number? Microsoft has a search engine called Bing. They "only" come out with 12.8 million hits. I believe Bing has more compelling images and videos than Google.

Here's my request - please, before you forward an article or claim, check it out on [http://www.snopes.com/](http://www.snopes.com) or <http://www.factcheck.org/>. As a bonus, the latter site does a great service in analyzing the statements of all presidential candidates, for accuracy. The bottom line is that they all fudge.

Happy searching!

Mario E. Orosa
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