



Searching The Web— Advanced Techniques

By Cris Canning

There are billions of documents concerning millions of subjects that can be found on the World Wide Web.

Last month's column discussed some common techniques to aid your search activities. These included "must include" (+), "must exclude" (-) and "match all" (""). While all search engines utilize these commands, many allow a more finite search with one or more of the following commands.

Find Similar—Did you find a Web page that seemed perfect? This feature tells the search engine to seek out other pages similar to those you like.

Find—After following a link to a document, it may be difficult to find a particular reference on the page. Use the "Find" feature on your toolbar, "Control+F" on a PC, or "Apple+F" on a Macintosh to search the text.

Field Searching—Field searching is one of the most effective techniques for narrowing results. A Web page is composed of a number of fields, such as title,

domain, host, URL and link. (A chart of commands and search engines can be found at www.searchenginewatch.com/facts/article.php/2155981.)

Title Search—The title appears in the blue banner at the very top of your browser's window. If you know the subject of a page, it's a good bet that important words describing that subject will appear within its title. Searching for a keyword in the title field, rather than as a keyword alone, will very likely produce more relevant responses. For example, if you were looking for information about George Washington on Alta Vista, you would enter the command *title: "George Washington"* to get sites where that name is in the title.

Domain Search—This allows you to limit search results to certain domains such as government sites (.gov) or educational institutions (.edu). If you wanted information on the Tower of London only from sites in the United Kingdom with Alta Vista you could enter *domain: uk + "Tower of London."*

URL Search—This type of search limits results to Web pages where the keyword appears in the URL or website address. A URL search can narrow very broad results to Web pages devoted to the keyword topic. For example, to find URLs with the keyword Halloween on Google, you would use the command *inurl: halloween*.

Site Or Host Search—This search comes in handy when you need to find something located at a large site that does not have an internal search engine. To find information on the Mars landing within the NASA website with Alta Vista, use *host: nasa "mars landing"* as a command.

Link Search—This is very useful to determine what websites are linked to a particular site. For example, use the command *link: www.pepsi.com* to find all the sites linked to Pepsi. Use it with your own website as well.

Boolean Logic

Boolean logic is a common search mechanism. It takes its name from British mathematician George Boole who wrote about the “calculus of thought.” Based on his writings, the Boolean logic and its operators (always in all capital letters) are used to link words and phrases for more precise queries.

AND—Narrows your search by retrieving only documents that contain every one of the keywords you enter. The more terms you enter, the narrower your

search becomes. Example: *truth AND justice AND ethics AND congress*.

OR—Expands your search by returning documents in which either or both keywords appear. Example: *college OR university*.

NOT/AND NOT—Limits the search by returning only your first keyword but not the second, even if the first word appears in that document. Example: *pepsi AND NOT coke*.

Nesting—Nesting, or using parentheses, is an effective way to combine several search statements into one command. Example: *(hybrid OR electric) AND (Toyota OR Honda)*. For best results, always enclose OR statements in parentheses.

Whichever search service you use, use the “Help” or “Advanced Search” feature to facilitate your search. In most cases, an effective search strategy, the correct use of Boolean logic and familiarity with the features of each search engine will lead to satisfactory results and save you both time and aggravation. §



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