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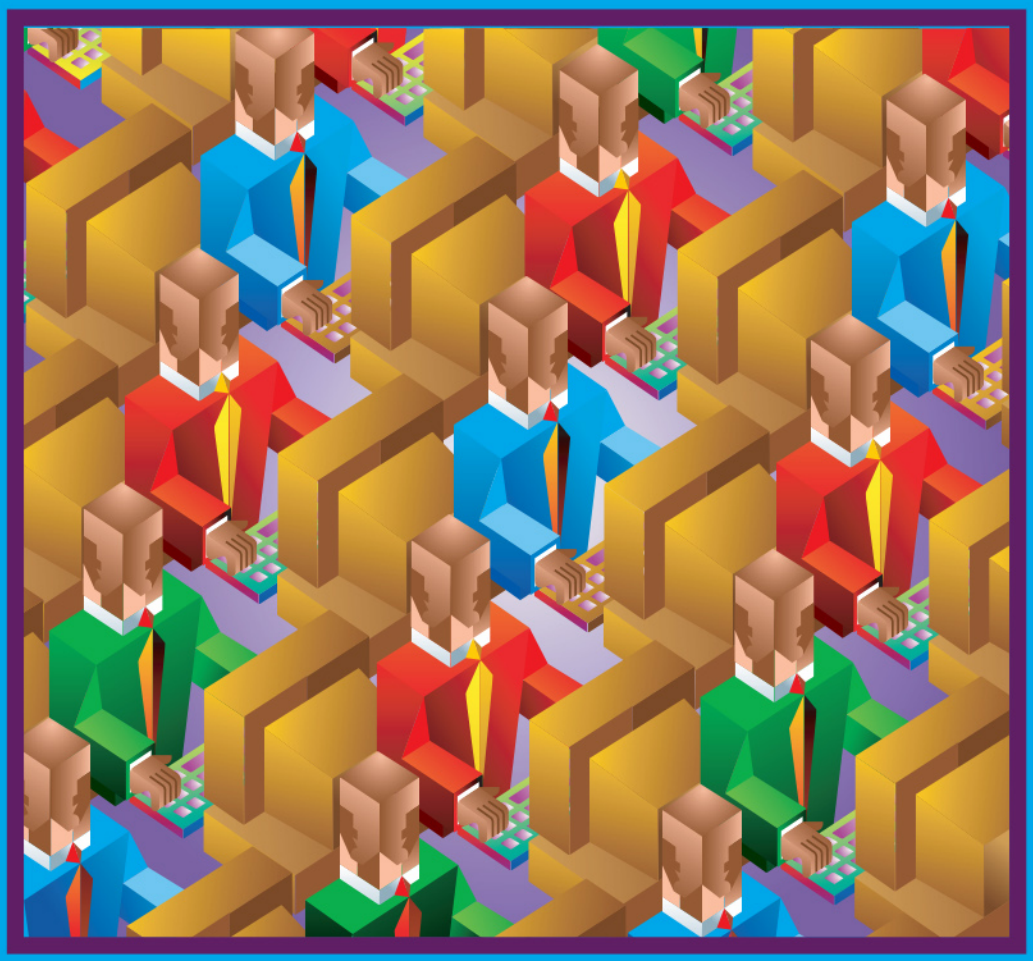
INTERNET SEARCH ACTIVITIES WORKBOOK

Educational Activities for Searching the Internet Effectively



Jane A. Fenton

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Educational Activities for Searching the Internet Efficiently

Jane A. Fenton

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Workbook #2

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Introduction

Introduction to the Internet

The Internet is a large group of millions of computers around the globe that are all connected to one another. These computers are connected by phone lines, fiber-optic lines, cable, satellites, and wireless connections.

Computer scientist, Vinton Cerf, developed the Internet and Transmission Control Protocols in 1973 while working on a project sponsored by the United States Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). It was originally intended to share data between just a few universities and government agencies. First to be linked were the University of California Los Angeles and the Stanford Research Institute on November 21, 1969. However, the year we generally consider to be the Internet beginning is 1995, because prior to this, the main users of the Internet were universities and large companies.

The Internet is made up of self-publishing Web sites. These sites have a wide variety of content, sources and information that may or may not be truthful. Use more than one site when searching for something and make sure that you evaluate the site(s) before citing them.

Search Engines

The World Wide Web is made up of millions of Web sites, which are made up of millions of Web pages. You can retrieve documents, view images, see animation and video, listen to music, speak to others and hear others, and view programs that run just about anywhere in the world.

To understand how to effectively find and view this information, it is necessary to learn how to search. To make a search possible on the Web, search engines are used. Search engines allow you to search by a keyword and then go through all available Web information and organize it so that you will have an easier time finding the answer you need.

A search engine is a document retrieval system created to help find information stored on a computer system, such as on the World Wide Web, inside a corporate network, or in a personal computer. The search engine allows you to ask for items that meet specific criteria and then retrieves a list of Web sites that contains the information that matches your criteria. The information retrieved may come back sorted in order of relevance.

The first "full text" crawler based search engine was WebCrawler in 1994. Unlike those before it, it let users search for any word in any Web page, which has become the standard for all major search engines. Lycos, which was started in 1994 at Carnegie Mellon University, became a major contender in the search engine world that same year.

No one really knows how many facts are stored on the Web. To find this information, there have been many search engines for the billions of facts including Infoseek (1994), AltaVista (1995), Excite (1995), Dogpile (1996), Ask Jeeves (1996), Google (1998), Info.com (2003), MSN Search (2004) and Ask.com (2006)—to name a few!

How Search Engines Work

When using a search engine, you really aren't searching the World Wide Web for information. In fact, you are actually searching a database of selected Web pages that the search engine has access to. A search engine can't think. It is merely a software program that sorts and searches a database for you. The more information you provide, the more likely it (the search engine's database) is to return with the answers you are looking for.

A search engine stores information about a large number of Web pages found on the World Wide Web. From these pages, a Web crawler or spider goes through the information and stores it in an index database. This is what you are searching. A search engine doesn't know what you actually want. It doesn't think. It searches by words, not ideas. Searching is part art and part science.

Search engines help to limit your searching time by using a keyword or phrase to perform the search. It is important that you try to use a keyword that will represent your specific needs. Should you ask an open-ended question, it will be harder to find a specific answer or to narrow down the answer. Ask a specific question and you will receive answers in a broad category that will have to be gradually narrowed down.

Internet Search Engine Tips

To use search engines effectively, it is essential to apply techniques that narrow results and list the most relevant pages at the begining of your search results. Below are strategies for refining your search skills.

Identify keywords

When searching, break down the topic into key concepts. For example, to find information on what the FDA has said about a peanut butter recall, the keywords might be FDA, peanut butter, recalls.

Boolean AND

Including the word AND in your search tells the search engine to find Web pages containing ALL of the keywords. For example, if you use the following keywords FDA and peanut butter and recalls, the search engine will not provide pages with just the word FDA. Nor will it provide pages with the word FDA and the words peanut butter. The search engine will only provide pages where the words FDA, peanut butter and recalls all appear somewhere on the page.

Boolean OR

Connecting search terms with OR tells the search engine to find Web pages containing ANY and ALL keywords. For example, if you use the following keywords: FDA or peanut butter or recalls, the search engine will return Web pages that contain a single keyword, several keywords, and all keywords. To narrow results as much

as possible, surround each OR statement with parentheses. Also, it is best to use OR when you have common synonyms for a keyword. For example, the following search will locate information on purchasing a used car: (car or automobile or vehicle) and (buy or purchase) and used.

Boolean AND NOT

Using AND NOT tells the search engine to only find Web pages containing one keyword but not the other. For example, if you use the following keywords patriots and not New England, the search engine will return Web pages about patriots, but not Web pages about the "New England Patriots" football team.

Using search indicators

Using a plus or minus sign is the equivalent of using the AND and AND NOT. To require that one of your words be included in the document, put a plus sign (+) in front of the word. For example, +United States. There cannot be a space after the + sign. If you wish to exclude a term in your search, use a minus sign (-).

Phrase Searching

Surrounding a group of words with double quotes tells the search engine to only find documents where the words in quotes appear side-by-side. This technique should be used as often as possible, as it will significantly narrow your search results. For example, if you use the search "Martin Luther King, Jr.", your results will only include pages that have the words Martin Luther King, Jr. strung together on the page.

Enter singular terms

Most search engines interpret singular keywords as singular or plural. If you want plural forms only, enter your keywords in the plural form.

Enter lower case letters

Most search engines interpret lower case letters as either lower case or upper case. Therefore, using lower case letters will result in finding ALL pages with that keyword. Capital letters are case sensitive. Your search will result in finding the exact match you are looking for. In other words, if you type the word President, you will get only results with a capital P. If your keyword is typed using lower case, you will get ALL instances of the word.

Avoid using common, generic terms

Do not use common words that have generic meanings or interpretations. For example, if you are searching for information about different types of coffee cups, the term "cup" is too generic. Try using "types of coffee cups" to yield more targeted results.

Check for TYPOS

Be sure to spell what you are searching for correctly. This is the most common error made by Internet users. For example, if you type the word "Mike" instead of "Nike," the search engine will return results for "Mike" since it does not know what you intended to search for.

Be persistent and creative

It's a BIG Web out there with billions of bits of information. You have to use your own imagination to make the most of search engines.

Domains

The current United States domains include the following:

.com	=	a commercial business
.edu	=	an educational institution
.net	=	a network site
.mil	=	a military site
.gov	=	a governmental institution
.org	=	a non-profit organization

What this book will do for you

Using the Internet Search Activities Workbook will help you become a more efficient and effective Internet searcher. You will practice techniques to narrow your searches so that only the most relevant pages appear in your search.

By completing the activities in this book, you will:

- Become more efficient at finding information quickly on the Internet
- Understand how to refine your search using a variety of techniques
- Find answers to questions that are supported by reliable sources
- Complete research more effectively

Table of Contents

Section a. General Knowledge

Activity a.1 Useful Sites on the Web 1
Activity a.2 Trivia Tidbits 3
Activity a.3 This and That 5
Activity a.4 Geography 7
Activity a.5 New York City 9
Activity a.6 Famous Duos 11

Section b. Technology

Activity b.1 Internet Facts 13
Activity b.2 Job Search 15
Activity b.3 Race for Information 17
Activity b.4 E-mail and Chatting 19
Activity b.5 Computer Facts 21
Activity b.6 More Computer Facts 23

Section c. Just for Fun

Activity c.1 The Facts, Just the Facts 25
Activity c.2 Take Three 27
Activity c.3 Extremes 29
Activity c.4 Scuba Diving 31
Activity c.5 Questions and More Questions 33
Activity c.6 Marketing 35

Sectlon d. Scavenger Hunt

Activity d.1 Roadside Attractions 37
Activity d.2 Weather or Not, Here We Come 39
Activity d.3 Scavenger Hunt 41
Activity d.4 Great Children's Stories 43
Activity d.5 Juggling 45
Activity d.6 Grave Epitaphs 47

Section e. Holidays and Seasons

Activity e.1 St. Patrick's Day 49
Activity e.2 Easter 51
Activity e.3 Thanksgiving Day 53
Activity e.4 Winter Holidays 55
Activity e.5 Holiday Bonus 57

NAME _____ DATE _____

Useful Sites on the Web

Objective: There is a lot of information that you will need to know on a daily or regular basis. This includes directions, phone numbers, headlines, and stock quotes, just to name a few. In this activity, you will research many useful sites on the Web that you may just use every day for the rest of your lives.

Using an Internet search engine, answer the questions below. In the space provided, list the URL address you visited to obtain each answer.

1. What is the number one selling CD this week?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

2. What is the headline from the front page of today's *LA Times*.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

3. If you take a home loan for $250,000 today at a 7% fixed rate for 25 years, how much will the monthly payment be?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

4. How do you say "Good Morning" in Dutch?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

5. How much per share is McDonald's stock selling for today? Hint: McDonald's stock symbol is MCD.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

Useful Sites on the Web

6. What day will May 7, 2025, fall on?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

7. What is the street address of the Russian Embassy in Washington, DC?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

8. What is today's weather forecast in Sydney, Australia?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

9. What year was McDonald's serving Neopets with their Happy Meal?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

10. What is the toll-free customer service number at Microsoft?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

NAME _____ DATE _____

Trivia Tidbits

Objective: Aside from the Web sites that you use on a daily basis, there are places on the Internet that you'll never go but once. This activity combines several of these sites and questions for you to explore.

Using an Internet search engine, answer the questions below. In the space provided, list the URL address you visited to obtain each answer.

1. According to the Internet site, Alexa, what is the most popular site used this week?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

2. How many Wendy's restaurants are there in the U.S.?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

3. What Web site can be used to find what the world looks like through the eyes of a honeybee?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

4. List five songs with the word "Love" in the title.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

5. What Web site can you use to find a map of the city (town) you live in?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

Trivia Tidbits

6. What is the current U.S. population?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

7. How many senators represent Florida?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

8. How many calories are in a regular bag (43g) of Reese's pieces?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

9. What Web site would you use to find a topographical map of Colorado?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

10. List the first three ingredients from a recipe for guacamole.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

NAME _____ DATE _____

This and That

Objective: In this activity, you will use the Internet to research miscellaneous information. And by the time you are finished, you will know a little about this and a little about that.

Using an Internet search engine, answer the questions below. In the space provided, list the URL address you visited to obtain each answer.

1. You are going to visit Japan and need to exchange money. Use a Web site with a money calculator to find out how many Japanese Yen $1,000 American dollars will give you.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

2. What was the name of Bill Clinton's cat when he was President?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

3. List the five boroughs that make up New York City.

Answer: _____

URL: _____

4. What year was the Berlin Wall erected?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

5. Where and in what year was the first public zoo in the United States established?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

This and That

6. What Civil War General later became the governor of New Jersey?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

7. Who was Alice Liddell?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

8. What was the most lopsided college football score ever, and when did it happen?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

9. What year was penicillin discovered, and who discovered it?

Answer: _____

URL: _____

10. What year was the first Miss America Pageant televised?

Answer: _____

URL: _____