Creative Searching

Goal: Explore the tools for searching the World Wide Web for materials on a particular subject.

Objectives: Use several different search engines to retrieve information on a particular subject. Compare the responses from the different search engines. Determine the variations in search goal description used by the different engines.

The World Wide Web is a collection of hundreds of thousands of individual items linked to other items and openly available to people who want them. The Web is growing at a tremendous rate. It is expected that most of the openly available information of the world will be accessible through the Web within 10 years. This does not mean the contents of every book, movie or recording. It does mean copies of public documents, catalogs, manuals, government publications and other open material. In addition, steps are being taken to publish many newspapers, magazines, and journals electronically. Some of these will be freely available; some will require an organization membership or a subscription for access. It is hard to imagine all the information resources that will be available on the Web. It is even harder to imagine how it will all be organized and how you will find what you really want or need from among all that neat stuff. Imagine a tremendous library that contains every book and magazine ever published and also has copies of films, recordings, and paintings. The problem is that the library has no index, no guide to what is where. How would you use such a resource? You could wander around and lose yourself in all the wonderful things there are to enjoy. However, you would be hard pressed to get something you need or a collection of materials on a particular topic.

This is the problem addressed by Web Search Engines. These are also called “spiders” because the crawl around the web and capture what they can find. Various spiders work in different ways and provide different kinds of information about web resources. They have one thing in common. Each spider does something like what you do when you go exploring on the Web. They look around at the various sites and see what is there. Then they make an index to what they have found. When a person is looking for something on the Web, the person can go exploring or can use the index created by one of the spiders. The indices created by the various spiders differ; the differences come from where the spiders crawl in their search of the web and in what information they choose to retain about what they find.

You will begin your experimentation with these search tools by connecting to:

WWW.BEAUCOUP.COM

This site contains a list of many different search engines as well as software repositories.

You will start by searching for articles or other information about hang gliding. Formulate a query for each of the search engines, using its rules and suggestions. See how many materials you get from each and which gives you the most pertinent results. Then choose a topic of your own. It might be something you are working on for another class, or something you found particularly interesting in this class.
Begin with InfoSeek Guide, so click on it to start up that search engine. **Click on the link offering help information and read about the ways to formulate your query.** All these tools have tried to make it easy for people to express what they want and not get confused with ANDs and ORs. After you do a search with InfoSeek Guide, try again using each of the other search tools, making sure you read the information about how to formulate your query first.

Fill in the following table for your search about Charles Schultz:

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<th>Name of search tool</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Number of useful responses</th>
<th>Ease of use</th>
<th>Quality of the results</th>
<th>Your comments about this search engine</th>
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<td>InfoSeek Guide</td>
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Fill in the following table for your search about your topic: (What is your topic? _____________________________________________________________)

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Scavenger Hunt:

Each item on the list can be found by using one of the Web's search services and carefully created queries. Some items are more difficult to find than others. To verify that you have located an appropriate site; you are to utilize the cut & paste features of windows and paste the URLs of the sites you located into an Email addressed to your instructor. The Email should contain your name, the letter of the item, and the URL of the site you found. As an example, the following format would be acceptable:

c. Etc.

Note: The above URLs are entirely fabricated. The URLs that you imbed in your Email should be “live links”, which means that your instructor can click them and go directly to the sites that you have found.

Hint: The best answers are those found by detailed, specific queries producing only a few very relevant results, and no inappropriate junk. All URLs will be evaluated to see if they truly locate an appropriate answer.

Find the following items:

a. A place in the United States where you can purchase voodoo dolls.
b. Japanese Language Lessons (online) for American children.
c. The most important event that happened on your birth date during any year from 1900 to the present year.
d. A current job listing relevant to your major or minor field of study.
e. The home page for a dog or cat rescue society.
f. The best place to go for an Australian bicycle trip.
g. A definition of mirepoix, with directions for finding and using it.
h. A complete worldwide listing of the two-character country codes used in international Internet addresses.
i. The best place to go shopping for vintage classic equipment used in your favorite sport or hobby.
j. The history of bagels.
k. Detailed instructions for creating a working electric motor out of easy-to-get “found” objects.
l. A “Teaching Tip for the Day” aimed at parents who home-school their children.
m. A place where you can get free information on how to create a healthy pond ecosystem.
n. Creation myths of a culture other than your own.
o. Makeup and fashion tips (both male and female) from famous entertainment, business, or sports celebrities.
p. A Solitaire game that contains at least 50 different variations of Solitaire.
q. Information about software that compares documents or papers for identifying plagiarism.
r. Three different software packages for your PC that will prevent hackers on the Internet from “breaking into” your system.