Searching the World Wide Web

Finding Information
There are basically three ways to locate information on the World Wide Web:
1. Enter the URL (Uniform Resource Locator – web address)
2. Links on a Web page
3. Search engine

The Internet: URLs
Every document on the Web has an address - the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). Each URL has several parts: the protocol, the host name and the domain name
http:// the first part identifies the document as a Web page.
.google host name
.com domain name that identifies category of the page. Other typical domain names include:
• gov - Government agencies;
• edu - Educational institutions;
• org - Organizations (nonprofit);
• mil – Military;
• com - commercial business;
• net – Network Organizations;
• ca – Canada;
• th – Thailand
A URL may have additional components that identify special features of the page such as https:// (hypertext transfer protocol secure) or html (hypertext markup language).

Most browsers will now locate a site even if you leave out the http:// part of the address or the www. part of the address. Experiment with a few URLs

Links on a Web page
Links are words or images on a web page that point to other web pages. When you move your arrow cursor over a link, a hand will appear. The link usually will become underlined and highlighted in a distinctive color. Clicking once on a link with your mouse will automatically take you to a connecting page. Since the Web is ever changing, some links may point to pages that no longer exist or have moved to a new location. When this happens, the computer will post a “file not found” message. (Your computer remembers where you were, letting you click on a “back arrow” to return to the previous page or pages).
Search Engines
Search engines are websites that allow you to type in a few key words and then present you with a list of possible links that might have the information you want. Although search engine is really a general class of programs, the term is often used to specifically describe systems like Google, Alta Vista and Excite that enable users to search for documents on the World Wide Web.

Basic Searching Methods and Language
Searching the Internet can bring the information from around the world into your home/office or it can be an incredibly frustrating and time consuming disaster. Here are some strategies that will increase the likelihood of finding relevant information.

Analyze your topic – what are you looking for? Searching for very broad subjects, such as history of the United States, will produce a huge number of “hits” and be very confusing. What do we really want to know – a particular period in U.S. history, a list of democratic presidents, inflation rates during the 20th century

Select keywords for your topic - The keywords you choose may or may not bring you the results you want. Be prepared to used similar words for your topic

Spelling help – Most search engines will show you results for the topic it thinks you are most likely to want even if you are not sure of the spelling. As you type, a list of possible topics will appear.

WebCrawler http://www.webcrawler.com

Google also has a preview feature. If you hoover your arrow cursor over the right side of a search result, Google will display a preview of the website.

Keyword Phrase searching - Some search engines require the use of “ “, +, -. Quotation marks are used around words you want searched as a phrase. The + in front of
a word (with no space) tells the search engine the word MUST appear in the results. The – in front of a word (with no space) tells the search engine that the word MUST NOT be included in the results. Since Google automatically returns pages that include all keywords, the plus sign (+) and the operator AND are not needed.

**Case sensitivity** - Most search engines ignore case. Generally, enter your search terms using lower case. It is quicker and will give you more results. However, if you are looking for a specific person, place, title, capitalize the first letter of each word.

**Boolean searching** – Click on for the Advanced Search option.

General speaking, search engines will have some advanced search feature that will automatically construct a Boolean logical search statement for you.

Clicking on Advanced Search in Google will bring you to a screen that prompts you with how to complete a Boolean type search.
Notice the “ ” around New York Giants and that the words did not have to be capitalized in the search field. Google searched for websites that had the three words next to each other. Advanced search queries can help you narrow/refine your search.

**Evaluating your sources**

It is very important to evaluate the validity of your information. Just because it appears on the Internet does not mean it is true, accurate, or reflective of any kind of reliable scholarship. The UC Berkeley Library has the following eight-point evaluation checklist:

- What can the URL tell you?
- Who wrote the page? Is he, she, or the authoring institution a qualified authority?
- Is it dated? Current - timely?
- Is information cited authentic?
- Does the page have overall integrity and reliability as a source?
- What's the bias?
- Could the page or site be ironic, like a satire or a spoof?
- If you have questions or reservations, how can you satisfy them?

**Using the Web Safely**

**Secure Websites:** You may decide to shop online, pay your bills online, or you may need to provide personal information for a job application. Be cautious! NEVER send personal information to an unknown or unsecure website. Too good to be true is always too good to be true. Look for websites that have an “s” in the url and a lock icon. Information you enter on a secure site will be encrypted so it cannot be “captured” by someone eavesdropping on your connection. Be especially vigilant in using public wireless connections. There are ways for people to scan the information you’re sending. Don’t hand someone your credit card by using an unsecured connection!

**Scams:** Don’t be a victim of modern day scam artists. Be alert to fraudulent e-mails and bogus pop-up messages. Your bank will never ask for personal information via e-mail. Pop-up advertisements from what appear to be reputable sources or “warnings” regarding your computer should be met with suspicion. (Block many pop-ups through your Tools settings.) These are ways to get you to send these people your personal information or sell
you something Investigate possible scams using the following sites: [http://snope.com](http://snope.com) and [http://OnGuardOnline.gov](http://OnGuardOnline.gov)

**Viruses:** Viruses are malicious software programs designed by other computer users to cause destruction and spread themselves to other computers. Viruses are loaded to your computer without your knowledge. Protect your computer using a virus safety software. Some popular brands are Norton and McAfee. An example of a freeware program is AVAST.
Now You Try It!!
Exercises for Searching the Internet

1. You want to research the history of the U.S. White house. Enter White House as your search term. Are the results specific to your topic? How many Results are listed? Now try history White House. Are the Results more relevant?

2. Click Images. You know Larry Hart has a wide selection of pictures of the history of Schenectady. What search terms would you enter? View images using your key words.

3. Click Maps. Enter your address. If a picture of your house appears on the map, click “street view” under the picture.

4. Click More Finance Enter GE for the latest stock quote.

5. Explore the popular YouTube feature under the More menu.

5. Click Search. Enter SCPL Click on the library homepage link. Click on “Research” on the left of the page. Explore the “Selected Internet Links” section.


Here are a few popular sites to explore
The White House www.whitehouse.gov
CNN www.cnn.com
Postage & zip codes www.usps.gov
Weather www.weather.com
Union College www.union.edu
Library of Congress www.loc.gov
Fodor’s restaurant guide www.Fodors.com
Amazon (books, music, etc.) www.amazon.com
ESPN www.espn.com
E-bay www.ebay.com
Craig’s list www.craigslist.com
Free downloads www.shareware.com
Games http://games.yahoo.com
Searching the Internet tutorials

http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html  Finding Information on the Internet: a Tutorial. Copyright (C) 2008 by the Regents of the University of California

http://www.refdesk.com/factbeg.html  Internet’s Beginner’s Guides & Tutorials. An assortment of 25 different links covering basic WWW to a mouse tutorial. (Not all links are currently available)


http://www.googleguide.com  Google Guide is an online interactive tutorial and reference for experienced users, novices, and everyone in between. Not affiliated with nor endorsed by Google

http://www.internettutorials.net  Easy to understand information on Boolean logic, search strategies and tools

http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html  Interesting comparison of three search engines by UC at Berkeley