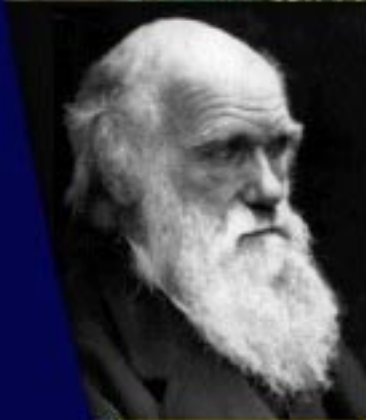


learners online

March 2001



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E-learning Goes Prime Time

J. Alan Baumgarten

A lot of fuss is being made over e-learning these days. Big corporations are spending lots of cash trying to figure out what it is and how it works. New e-learning sites are springing up. And e-learning developers are getting heaps of venture capital.

Why all the fuss? Two years ago at COMDEX, Cisco's CEO predicted that e-learning would be the next killer Internet app. What he actually said was that e-learning is now what e-commerce was two or three years ago. (I hope that's not exactly the case given the pounding dot.coms have been taking lately).

E-learning, for those new to the term, means delivering instruction via the Web. Instruction can mean anything from corporate training to university degrees to learning beyond the years of formal instruction.

A few companies are already well on the way to gaining a foothold in the burgeoning e-learning marketplace. Check out a few of them: www.blackboard.com, www.knowledgeanywhere.com, and for you K-12 folks www.achieva.com, and www.apexlearning.com.

I'm sharing these sites because I want you all to realize that students who use the Web to learn now will be in a much better position to learn from Web-based tools in the future. And if e-learning keeps advancing the way it is, it will certainly be part of every student's future.

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Heroes of Ancient Greece

J. Alan Baumgarten

There are a lot of good reasons for studying the mythology of ancient Greece. Greek is a root language of modern English (and other languages), including our entire modern medical vocabulary. Greek traditions and culture have remained a part of Western civilization for over 2500 years. We still see the influence of ancient Greece in our art and theater, our music, our sports, our government-virtually every aspect of our society and culture.

Understanding Greek mythology is an important part of understanding ourselves. But even beyond all that . . . they're just great stories. After a weary old Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge or a foray into Faulkner, your Language Arts students will surely pick their heads up off their desks when the topic turns to Hercules and the twelve labors.

What's more, a compilation of Greek mythology web sites can make the study of Greek heroes highly engaging and accessible for students of all skill levels. Please note that while many of these sites provide a good reference point for general mythology (gods, demons, etc.), the focus here will be on heroes.

MythWeb

Your first job is to get students to forget everything they learned from the revisionist historians at Walt Disney Corporation. You know which film I'm talking about. And there have been plenty of other films and television shows that have distorted the legends of ancient Greece far beyond their true origins (history has distorted them enough as it is).

With so much background knowledge potentially working

Curriculum Standard

- [TEKS: 110.23](#)
English Language Arts

(7.12 E) The student understand literary forms by recognizing and distinguishing among such types of text as stories, poems, myths, fables, tall tales, limericks, plays, biographies, and autobiographies.



against you, the best way to reclaim some knowledge may be to apply some entertainment of your own. You'll find such a place online at [MythWeb](#), a site devoted to the heroes, gods and monsters of Greek mythology. Direct your students to the [Heroes](#) section, where they can learn about [Jason](#), [Hercules](#) (Heracles), [Bellerophon](#), [Theseus](#), and everybody's favorite wanderer [Odysseus](#).

These stories are all animated or wonderfully illustrated cartoon style, and students love them. Before jumping into the stories—good luck holding students back—direct them to scroll down the Heroes page and read the introduction. Do this as a class, and discuss briefly the notion of Greek heroes being selfish and anti-social. Are there any heroes in our culture that match that description? Some superstar athletes perhaps?



Don't turn students loose just yet. Assign them to work in groups and, as they learn about Greek heroes, compare them to superheroes in 20th Century comics—Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, the X-Men, etc. Compare traits such as superhuman strength and skill. Also compare motives, sociality, personality, etc.

This site could also be used for a great jigsaw activity. Assign groups to read one of the hero stories, and then narrate or act out the story for the class, all groups going in turn.

And if your students are really on the ball, the site is available in Latin.

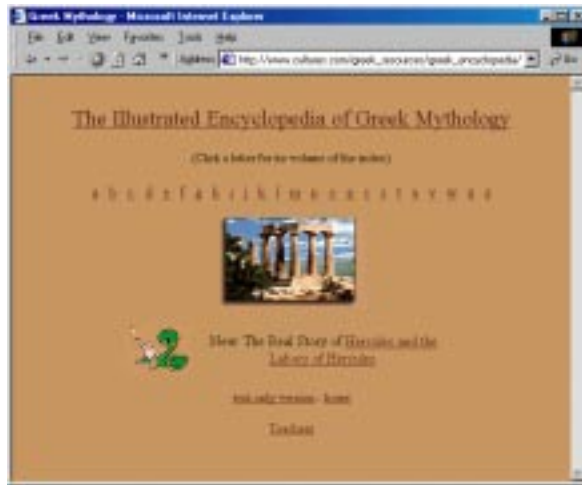
Greek Mythology—Hero

The five heroes your students read about at MythWeb are a good start, but there are others. Visit the [Hero](#) section of the [Greek Mythology](#) web site. Certainly students can reference some of



the heroes they already learned about, but they should focus on the new ones: Perseus, Atalanta, and Meleager. This site offers a nice reference if students want to look up a few of the creatures that the Greek heroes battled.

Speaking of reference, now that your students know the basic story lines of eight Greek heroes, take them to the [Illustrated Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology](http://www.cultures.com/greek_resources/greek_encyclopedia/) at Cultures.com. Using the alphabet index, have them look up the name of each hero.



Ask students to identify any new information, and tell what effect it has on their understanding of each hero's story.

Reference:

MythWeb – Heroes

<http://www.mythweb.com/heroes/heroes.html>

Greek Mythology

http://www.frizzell.org/Greek/greek_myth.html

Illustrated Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology

http://www.cultures.com/greek_resources/greek_encyclopedia/greek_encyclopedia_home.html

larger version) of the home site's overview map of the archipelago to post on the wall. Have each team present their project to the class and place it around the wall overview (3D projects can sit on tables below the map) with a string attached from each island to each team's representation.

As a class, discuss how each island is somewhat different in its characteristics, therefore offering slightly different habitats for plant and animal species.

The Wild Side of Galapagos

Because the Galapagos is a group of islands the region provides three general environments-- marine, coastal and terrestrial--in a relatively compact space. Since the oil spill would most directly affect ocean-dependent species, have individual students or cooperative teams visit [TerraQuest Virtual Galapagos](#) and click [Wildlife](#) on the top menu. Have each student or group choose a coastal or marine animal to study, beginning with the brief descriptions provided at this site. Further research should allow students to discover the range of their species (for example, do they stay close to the archipelago or do they migrate many miles away somewhere then return at some point?), general traits, what they eat, how and where they reproduce, etc.



Darwin's Fantastic Finches

Most people notice that different species of birds look different, and sometimes they notice that different types of birds eat different things. In Galapagos, 13 types of finches exist, apparently all cousins descended from a single species. When Darwin visited the islands in the 1830s, although he didn't recognize the genetic closeness of the birds, he did note that each had developed a beak that specialized in getting and consuming a particular food source.

Have students return to the [Wildlife](#) section of [Virtual Galapagos](#), and then click [Island Life](#). From the main content section, have them click [Birds](#), and then [Finches](#). As individuals or in teams of two, have students pick one of the finches to study. Ask them to research their bird species further and find out what it eats, where it lives (which islands and what specific kinds of habitats), what it looks like, and how its beak is designed. Assign students to write an essay describing how all of these characteristics are interrelated then explain it to the class. Additionally, enlarge the overview map from Cornell University or use the [TerraQuest's Virtual Galapagos Atlas](#) to post, then have students draw home ranges for their species in different colors.



As an extension that can last until the end of the school year, have the class start a bird-sighting list. Start by identifying what bird species are already being seen in the local area, display photos and list the eating habits of each bird. As the weather warms, add the migrating species to the list, continuing to discuss what each bird eats based on its beak design and where it lives (seasonally and spatially within an area).

Reference:

Galapagos Geology on the Web

<http://www.geo.cornell.edu/geology/GalapagosWWW/GalapagosMap.html>

TerraQuest Virtual Galapagos

<http://www.terraquest.com/galapagos/>

Women's History Month

Geru Ruane

Name _____

In 1981, Congress proclaimed the week of March 8th as National Women's History Week. Six years later, they extended this focus on women to the entire month of March. In this Internet Challenge™ let's celebrate National Women's History Month by recognizing the contributions women have made in every area of human endeavor.

The site you will be visiting is [The Women of the Hall](http://www.greatwomen.org/grtwmn.htm) at <http://www.greatwomen.org/grtwmn.htm>

Scroll down the page and read the fascinating facts about women in the National Women's Hall of Fame. Click any of the highlighted names to learn more about that Woman of the Hall, and then click [The Women of the Hall](#) to return to the main list.

Who are these remarkable ladies?

1. She was the founder the American Red Cross and became known as the "Angel of the Battlefield." Answer:
2. At the age of 19 months, an illness left her deaf, blind and mute. Later in life, she became a powerful and effective national spokesperson on behalf of others with similar disabilities. Answer:
3. This woman was a zoologist whose concern over the damaging effects of pesticides and other poisons on the environment led to her groundbreaking work, *Silent Spring*. Answer:
4. She was the first black woman elected to Congress from the South and the first black woman to deliver the keynote address at the Democratic Convention, 1976. Answer:
5. This woman, a mathematics genius, computer pioneer, inventor and teacher, was the first woman to attain the rank of Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy. Answer:
6. The founder in 1968 of the Special Olympics for the mentally challenged, she has worked for nearly four decades to provide persons with mental retardation the chance to become useful and productive citizens who are accepted and respected in their communities. Answer:
7. Known as a suffragist and reformer who convened the first women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848, she has been memorialized as the founding genius of the women's rights movement. Answer:

Internet Challenge—Woman's History continued

8. One of the century's most powerful and respected labor movement leaders, she helped co-found the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez in 1962. Answer:
9. The author of The Battle Hymn of the Republic, she was a pioneer for women as a writer, poet, reformer and lecturer. Answer:
10. One of the century's premier athletes who excelled at every sport by combining her natural talent with hard work, this woman won track and field gold medals at the 1932 Olympics. Answer:
14. In a lifelong partnership with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, this woman's organizational skill and selfless dedication built the women's rights movement and paved the way for women's right to vote. Unscramble these letters: NAUSS B YANNHTO
15. This woman, an attorney in civil rights and labor law, always championed women's rights, human rights, equality, peace and social justice. Unscramble these letters: LLEBA ZGUBA

Good work! See if you can unscramble these letters to form a famous woman's name. You will get a hint for each.

11. Medical doctor, engineer and astronaut, this woman believes that "space is the birthright of everyone who is on this planet." Unscramble these letters: EMA SIMOJEN
12. A longtime advocate of woman suffrage, she was the first African-American woman to study as a nurse and work as a professionally trained nurse. Unscramble these letters: RYMA YMEANHO
13. In her famous "Remember the Ladies" letter, the wife of one of our presidents proposed to her husband that women should be permitted to legally own property. Unscramble these letters: IGIAABL SAMDA

Extension Activity

Travel to the [National Women's History Project](http://www.nwhp.org/whm/themes/themes.html) at www.nwhp.org/whm/themes/themes.html.

Read about six women who will be honored for their achievements in this year's National Women's History Month. Which of these six remarkable women would you want to meet? If you were able to interview her, what kinds of questions would you ask?

Choose one of the six women listed on this web page that you find the most interesting. Use other resources (encyclopedias, books, magazines, Internet – with adult supervision) to learn more about her. Then, make a list of five questions you would ask her. What inspirational message did you learn from this special lady? Discuss your findings with your teacher and classmates.

Congratulations on completing this Internet Challenge! We've only begun to explore the inspiring achievements of women of every race and ethnicity. Their contributions to social progress and to our knowledge in the fields of math, science, art and literature have helped make life better for us all.

Answers to March's Internet Challenge

1. Clara Barton
2. Helen Keller
3. Rachel Carson
4. Barbara Jordan
5. Grace Murray Hopper
6. Eunice Mary Kennedy Shriver
7. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
8. Dolores Huerta
9. Julia Ward Howe
10. Mildred "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias
11. Mae Jemison
12. Mary Mahoney
13. Abigail Adams
14. Susan B. Anthony
15. Bella Abzug

Extension Activity. [Students' own answers].

Curriculum Standard

- [TEKS: 110.6](#)
English Language Arts

(4.10 J) Reading/
comprehension. Students
distinguish between fact and
opinion in various texts.

Is That a Fact?

Elisha Dillon

As teachers, we want our students to learn to be independent thinkers. It is vital to teach kids how to differentiate between fact and opinion. Students today find information on the Internet and watch hours of television commercials. We need to give our class the tools to discover facts in such an age of information.

Before the class visits these sites, review the difference between a fact and an opinion.

Just the Facts

A fact is a statement that can be proven. One easy way to illustrate how to prove a fact is to measure a few items in the classroom. Have the class estimate the length of each item and use a ruler to prove the height of each object. Spend some time having students share facts about your class, your school, or your town. Can these statements be proven? Always have the students explain how they know their fact is true.

Opinions

An opinion is a statement of what a person thinks, believes, or feels. It cannot be proven. Sometimes an opinion is called a non-fact. The following are some words that signal an opinion: think, feel, believe, best, better, worse, worst, never, always. An activity that the class will enjoy is listing their favorite foods. Explain why this is their opinion. Review other opinions such as favorite restaurants, sports teams, or movies. Have students explain why these are opinions and not absolute facts.



Fact Finding

Young learners are always interested in animals. Learning facts about their favorite animal will reinforce the importance of gathering facts correctly. Take your class on a fact-finding tour of Enchanted Learning's [All About Nature](#) page. Here, students can research their favorite animals, either independently or in small groups. Click on a letter of the alphabet at the top of the page to view the names of animals that start with that particular letter. For a more refined search tell the class to click on one of the various categories listed.

From here students can select an animal to investigate. Most of the animal descriptions are brief but full of facts. If you have time, let students print the fact sheet for their animals. Ask the class who might need to know these facts about animals? Why is it important for a veterinarian or a zoologist to have correct facts about animals that they help? Now have each student write a brief paragraph summarizing the facts they learned.

The Influence of Television

The advertising industry makes millions of dollars each year promoting their opinions. Every company believes their product is the best in some way. Students are already familiar with many television commercials. Brainstorm as a class and write a list of current television commercials and the products they promote. Have your students tried these products? Are they as good as the commercial promised?

The Zillions web site is giving out a [Zap Award](#) to a toy featured in a commercial that children find misleading. The commercial is accused of not accurately portraying the facts. Take your class to this site and read the presented information and view the ad by scrolling over each of the six scenes. Students can read what is said in the commercial. Now read the bottom of the page to see what is really included with the toy.



As you read the presented information to the class be sure to point out all the opinions in the ad. The product name even includes an opinion. Now your class can vote to see if this commercial deserves a Zap award. What did your class learn from this site? Can they always believe everything seen on television? This is just one example of why it is so important to always know the facts before we make decisions.

AdCritic.com is a site dedicated to television commercials, and a good place to practice critical viewing (note: preview *all* ads you want your students to watch). When the site opens, have your students type "Kids" in the search box and then click [Go](#). On the results page, you will see the company listed on the left with the corresponding commercial descriptions on the right. You may wish to select a few commercials for your class to view



and bookmark them. What are these commercials trying to show about their products? Do you believe this commercial is effectively promoting the product? After viewing and comparing a variety of commercials, ask the class if they believe commercials sell best based on facts or opinions. Remind the class that many commercials contain both facts and opinions.

To apply fact and opinions to real life situations, give groups of students a box with plain paper on the outside. Each group will create two mini-commercials for their product that they can present to the class. For example, if a group has a box that is obviously a cereal box, they need to create a name for the cereal, a description, and create a box cover that is appealing to consumers. One commercial should be facts only and another commercial should be opinions only. Have groups act out commercials for the class. Which type of commercial is easiest to create? Which one will make viewers want to buy the product?

Political commercials are known for their mix of nonfactual and factual information. [The Living Room Candidate](#) section of the American Museum of Movie Imaging site allows students to view American political television commercials dating back to 1952. (RealPlayer or Windows Media is required, and students

will have to click the school's correct format to open the section.)

Show students commercials from several decades. How are the commercials different? Is all the information true in these commercials? Do students think commercials have a big influence on voters? Now let each student create an individual campaign poster for class president or a similar leadership position. Challenge students to have at least three facts on their posters as they list reasons to vote for themselves. As your class shares their posters with the class be sure to identify facts and opinions stated on the posters.



Your class has practiced applying the skill of differentiating facts from opinions to everyday life. Now they know the meaning of the phrase, "You can't judge a book by its cover."

Reference:

All About Nature

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/coloring/>

Zap Award

<http://www.zillions.org/Features/Toyadtricks/toyad001.html>

AdCritic.com

<http://www.adcritic.com/>

The Living Room Candidate

<http://www.ammi.org/livingroomcandidate/>

Curriculum Standard

- [TEKS: 113.22](#)
Social Studies

(6.1) History. Students analyze the historical background of selected contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions.

Border to Border

Lisa Kerscher

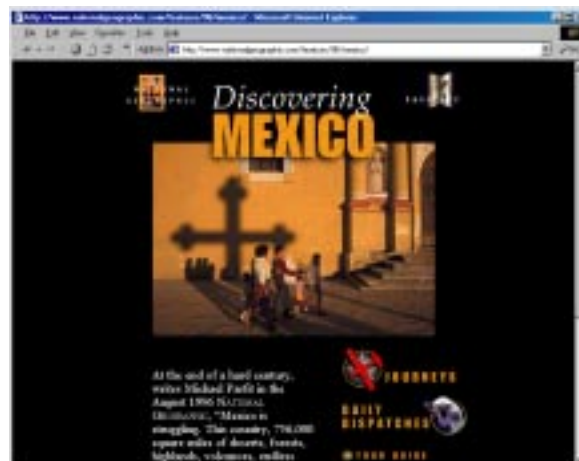
On Friday, February 16, 2001, President George W. Bush visited the neighboring country of Mexico to meet with Mexican President Vicente Fox about current and future relations with the United States. Mexico's history with its northern neighbor includes border disputes, immigration issues, and trade agreements. Mexico has also become a popular vacation destination for American tourists. But Mexico itself is a diverse and sometimes divided nation, which has grown over many years and has seen the rise and fall of many powerful cultures and conquerors. Meanwhile, the varied landscapes and religious roots continue to influence people's way of life throughout the country.

For this month's current events lesson, you will travel to Mexico to learn more about its history, culture and people.

Modern Mexico

First, pinpoint Mexico's general geography by looking at some facts from the CIA World Fact Book at [Geographic.org](#). Start by looking at Mexico's [flag](#), and then view a [map](#) of the country to get a better idea of where the nation is located relative to its neighboring lands and oceans. Next, learn some basic facts about [Mexico's people](#), like the population's age structure, birth and death rates and migration rate, and compare those facts with the [U.S. population](#).

Take a virtual tour of Mexico at National Geographic's site, [Discovering Mexico](#). After entering the site and reading the introduction, visit the [Journeys](#) section, where you can explore the four different regions of the country—[Tijuana and the Border](#), [The Heartland](#), [Mexico City](#), and [Chiapas](#). Read the articles and view the colorful photos for each



of the areas. If your computer has Real Player, you can also hear the author reveal more about his journeys to these places. What are the differences and similarities between the regions? You can also explore the [Daily Dispatches](#) to see more photos and read more about these interesting people and their cultures. Some of the links also provide audio clips of local music.

The Ancient Ancestors

People have lived in the area now known as Mexico for thousands of years, during which time the region and its people have had many struggles and triumphs. Start your journey into these ancient times by visiting the [Different World](#) site and reading [Mexico: A Brief History](#). This feature compares the early civilization of Mexico with the development of Rome, 900 B.C. to 1500 A.D. Here, you can learn about the ancient groups, such as the Olmecs, Toltecs and Mayans, and their cities while exploring this timeline and the related locations. Just click on the underlined links within the timeline to view the brief histories and see the photos of the ancient pyramids and other artifacts.



The Struggle for Independence and Identity

As Mexico has developed over time to become a united and independent nation, the people have experienced many struggles. After the arrival of Hernan Cortes from Spain, who came to explore and conquer the area of Mexico, the native people fought for their rights and for their land, not only with Spain, but also with French invaders and the Americans who were working hard to expand their frontiers from the northern Atlantic coast.

Explore the history of these struggles at PBS's site, [The Border](#). In the [History](#) section, open the [Interactive Timeline](#) or view the faster loading Text Timeline. Study the history of Mexico and its people from 1519-1998. You can click on the underlined sentences to read the more detailed summaries and learn about important events such as Mexico's independence

from Spain, the U.S.-Mexican War, the Mexican Revolution, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and other events that especially relate to U.S. and Mexican relations.

You should also check out the [Morphing Map](#), an animation that shows how the Mexican-U.S. border has changed over time. How would you describe the relationship between these two neighbors over time? How has the involvement and independence of Texas affected events? How do you think history has influenced the current relationship between these countries?



Reference:

Geographic.org – World Fact Book

<http://www.theodora.com/wfb/>

National Geographic – Discovering Mexico

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/96/mexico/>

Mexico: A Brief History

<http://www.differentworld.com/mexico/common/pages/history.htm>

PBS – The Border

<http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/>

District Technology Planning

Part 1 - The Committee

Raymond Jaksa, MS

A comprehensive technology plan is critical as schools, teachers, students, and communities attempt to articulate a set of broad goals that will maximize the learning capabilities of students and prepare them for the 21st century. The district technology plan will be to:

- Establish a process that develops the effective use of technology, in accordance with the District Improvement Plan, to support, improve, and enhance technology and learning in the school system.
- Develop strategies for creating critical mass and equitable access to technology in each school within the system.
- Enable the school to obtain district funds via approval of a comprehensive and systemic campus technology plan (District technology funding will be contingent upon submission of a campus technology plan with the campus improvement plan.).
- Identify new technical infrastructure that provides a basis for future procurement decisions.
- Enhance existing or form new collaboration to achieve critical mass and economies of scale to influence technology markets and procurement options with businesses and other districts.
- Implement staff development activities designed to integrate the use of technology into specific curriculum to improve learning.

The plan itself is fluid, constantly in need of evaluation and modification as the curriculum, educational initiatives, as technology grows and changes.

Mansfield Technology Planning Process

The technology planning process must be an extensive, collaborative, an ongoing effort that is likely to supersede, overlap, and

encompass building-level projects in magnitude and scope. It requires a systemic change that accepts the incorporation of technology into the curriculum as a standard practice in the classroom environment.

The technology planning process is designed to lead educators systematically through a comprehensive planning course by providing a set of integrated technical support services at the district and campus levels. The many by-products of this process (i.e., team building, development of stakeholder commitment, and enriched vision of educational technologies) that develop throughout the technology planning process are equally as important as the resultant document.

Key Stakeholders

The overall purpose of the district technology planning is not only to produce a written plan, but also to build constituent support for the use of technology to improve student learning. As a result, it is essential that this planning involve "key stakeholders" from the onset. The following list of key stakeholders will be considered for membership in the district technology planning committees:

Team One: Educational

- Superintendent(s)
- School principal(s)
- Library media, and technology staff
- Vocational and technical
- Representative(s)
- Special education personnel
- Title 1 personnel
- Classroom teachers
- Students/alumni
- Public library personnel

Team Two: Community

- Higher education personnel
- Legislative representation
- City leaders
- Business/industry education specialists
- Parents
- District school board
- School business manager
- Maintenance personnel
- Local banking institution

Even though a large percentage of committee members think their technology plan addresses curriculum, technology integration, and school improvement initiatives, members of the campus technology committee and other district and community leaders must respect the wide range of interpretation regarding the comprehensive plan.

Thus, there is a need to develop specific guidelines for technology planning that will ensure consistency of process and format, enabling the district to evaluate and interpret the plan consistently. Part 2 will address the process of planning.

Web Search Engines

E. Shane Turner

The amount of information now available on the Internet is staggering, and it continues to grow at a mind-boggling rate. This means anyone doing research on virtually any conceivable topic could access relevant information on the World Wide Web, and could do so from any Web browser anywhere in the world. But the problem is this: of all the millions of web pages available, how can you find resources that contain the information you are seeking?

It would be impossible to find resources by manually typing web addresses (URLs) into your web browser hour after hour in hopes of stumbling across some useful information. Fortunately, arduous searching is not necessary for anyone who knows how to effectively use an Internet search engine. This article will attempt to explain what search engines are, how they work, and identify some of the most popular search engines available.

What is a search engine?

From a user perspective, an Internet **search engine** is nothing more than a Web site that can be used by the general public to locate other Web sites. The user simply accesses the search engine by entering the appropriate URL (Web address) into his or her browser. The search engine will then display a Web page that allows the user to enter a particular word, set of words, or an exact phrase, and then the engine will attempt to locate other Web pages that contain the desired text. The results of this request will be displayed in the user's browser window when the engine completes its search. In many cases, the number of web pages matching the user's request is so large that they cannot all be displayed at once. Consequently, the search engine will attempt to order the results so that the best matches appear on the first results page, while lower quality matches are pushed "down the list" onto other results pages. The user may then scan the list, select a matching Web site, or move to subsequent results pages in a simple point-and-click fashion.

How do search engines work?

When a user submits a request to a search engine, the engine does not actually start scanning all of the Web pages in Cyberspace to locate

matches. Obviously this would take an extraordinarily long time to complete, and would render the search engine useless. Instead, the engine will search a local “index” that was previously constructed by the engine, and is constantly being updated. This index contains a comprehensive list of all known words and phrases, and the Web sites it has scanned in order to construct this list. The engine then returns a list of those matching sites to the user in response to a search request.

So how do search engines know what sites to scan in order to construct their local index? In most cases, the engines add sites to their index in response to user requests. Suppose, for example, that a businessman has just created a new site that he hopes to use to sell books to people everywhere. In order to help “the world” discover his bookseller web site, the businessman will typically “register” his site with all of the most popular search engines. The registration process is essentially a request for the search engine to scan his Web pages, and add their contents to the engines local index. And that’s all there is to it!

Are there any drawbacks to using search engines?

Like every major technology, search engines are not perfect. It is common, for example, for users to conduct a search for a particular topic, and then discover that some of the Web pages included in the search results are not valid. This often happens when a particular Web site moves to a different Web server, or ceases operation altogether.

In addition, search engines are perhaps the single biggest reason that students will sometimes stay to Web sites that are not appropriate for educational environments. Suppose, for example, that a student wanted to do a research paper on breast cancer, and performed an innocent search request for the word “breast”. You can rest assured that the results of this request will include many adult-oriented and pornographic sites from around the world. Many other objectionable sites that promote racism, violence, and decadent lifestyles can also be located by search engines, so it is important for students to learn to use these powerful tools in appropriate ways, and with appropriate supervision.

Which search engines are most popular?

There are literally thousands of sites on the World Wide Web that give users the ability to search for a specific string of text. However, most of these search tools are restricted to the confines of one specific site, such as a home site of a particular corporation. But there are several other well-known search engines that are designed to provide

global responses to user requests. These sites—sometimes referred to as Web portals—include the following (in alphabetical order):

- Alta Vista - www.altavista.com
- America Online - www.aol.com
- CompuServe - www.compuserve.com
- Excite - www.excite.com
- Google - www.google.com
- Lycos - www.lycos.com
- Microsoft Network - www.msn.com
- Prodigy - www.prodigy.com
- Snap - www.snap.com
- Yahoo! - www.yahoo.com

All of these sites provide powerful Web searching capabilities, and they all have their faithful followers. They also have subtle variations in the way they process search requests, so it is important for users to check the search tips pages at each site to find out how to make the best use of the engine.

Conclusion

Arguably there is more information available on the Internet than in any library in the world. With so much information at our fingertips it is essential that we learn how to utilize Internet search engines to access that knowledge base. If it were not for the wonderful capabilities of these popular indexing tools, much of Cyberspace would go unnoticed and unused by the general public, and the Web probably would not have become what it is today.
