Chapter 12

Google Search: 
Digging into the Culture of Information Retrieval

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores Google Search as an information discovery tool and various similar retrieval tools facilitated by Google such as Google Scholar, Google Patents, Google Books, and Google CSE etc. It also confers various search strategies offered by Google to carry out search queries. All services availed by Google are substantially very helpful for the library professionals to disseminate information services to their clientele. Google tools may be used by the libraries to upgrade their library and information services almost at no cost. Invention of Google and prodigious services of Google has turned our current era into Google era. The argument made in this chapter relates the facilities offered by Google to modern libraries, and information retrieval services.

INTRODUCTION

The ironic proverbial saying that ‘a month in the laboratory can save you an hour in the library’ is proving itself repeatedly and at a huge cost to both academic and commercial institutions alike. Missed information in the literature costs time, money, and quality. Both the quality of decisions made and the quality of subsequent research output is compromised when the available information is not realized. (Banville, 2009)

This statement exhibits the importance of library and retrieval of information available in the literature. It is the duty of a researcher to do an extensive literature review on the research he is willing to carry or else it will be a great loss to him, society, and the nation as a whole. Information retrieval therefore is an important topic on which an extensive debate is possible.

If we discuss about the information retrieval in libraries of the past, our memories settle on catalogue cards, which were the main tool of information retrieval or searching reading material from a library.

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However, with the inception of online culture and advancement of the Internet and Web, a number of search strategies and tools have been developed over a period of time. These search strategies include Boolean search, truncation, building blocks, wild-card, field-based search and many more. These search strategies not only retrieve the information about the relevant documents rapidly, but also make them accessible with a single click. Various databases use one or more of such information discovery or retrieval techniques. Internet search engines are also not an exception. The honour of being the world’s first search engine goes to Archie, a search engine in existence before the existence of the Web itself, developed in 1990 by a student of the University of McGill, named Alan Emtage (Battelle, 2005, p. 39). By the time, internet had become a popular tool among researchers to upload their research papers on public servers. After the invention of the World Wide Web, a number of search engines came into existence. Google is more popular than any other search engines. It has not restricted itself as a search engine, but also proved much more than a search engine that became very popular among the researchers as an information discovery tool. For example, when one searches on Google Scholar for an article, it not only searches the articles from various databases but also tries to browse the sources from where it can be downloaded even without subscription to the particular database. Google uses many information discovery techniques that facilitate users. Being a free search tool, Google has substantiated itself as a better search tool for all segments of users, including the academic and research community.

ABOUT GOOGLE

Google, developed in 1998, is a product of the brains of Larry Page and Sergey Brin, students of Stanford University. Their idea was to find a better way to organize and search the Web rather than just ranking the results by counting how many times a term appears on a page as being done by most of the search engines of that time (Burns & Sauers, 2004). With the realisation of their idea, very rapidly Google has become a synonym of the term ‘search’ among layman and researchers. People have started using the term ‘googling’ for searching something over the Web. It is sufficient to understand the dominance of Google over the world of search engines that the term ‘Google’ and ‘googling’ become part of prominent dictionaries in a very short time. Google is all about searching and now it possesses a very strong position in the universe of World Wide Web. Anyone who knows about the World Wide Web and Internet is bound to know about Google. As of today, Google provides a wide range of services to the users (both computer and mobile). Most of the services provided by Google are accessible with a single and unique user ID of Google. However, in this chapter, the author has limited the discussion about the services which are related to information discovery, and providing information retrieval services, i.e. GoogleSearch, GoogleScholar, Google Patents, Google Books, and Google CSE. By making use of these services, an information professional can deliver the information more effectively.

Google Search

The Google Search engine was developed in 1998 and proliferated among almost every single user of the Internet and Web. It was not a case that there were no search engines available on the Web before Google; there were so many search engines available such as Archie, the first search engine, VLib, Excite, World Wide Web, Wanderer, ALIWEB, etc., but after the arrival of Google all have diminished their sparkles. The reason behind this was the unique search results from Google. Google used a search
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