

Web Searching

Web Basics

There are two basic ways to search the Web: **search engines** and **directories**. Many Web sites and Internet utilities contain both features.

A **search engine** is a tool that allows you to find documents containing words that you select. When you type in search terms and click “Search,” the computer receiving your request will search all the documents in its file and return those that contain your term(s). It is common to find thousands of Web documents when you do a basic search, so the search engine is programmed to rank the documents for relevancy. Examine several of the top few pages; thereafter, you may find the Web sites listed to be off-topic. Search engines are computer-driven ways of finding documents; the computer cannot really tell whether the documents it finds are of any use to you or not.

A **directory** is an organized list of documents, put together in categories, by humans, usually librarians. Think of the yellow pages in your phone book. That's a directory. Directories give you fewer, but more relevant, documents. The Web sites that have been selected for a directory may vary in quality, but they are likely to be on-topic.

Some web sites contain both directories and search engines. Explore these:

Google

<http://directory.google.com/>

Yahoo

www.yahoo.com

(scroll down for the directory)

Internet Public Library

www.ipl.org

Librarian's Index to the Internet

<http://lii.org/>

All search engines and directories provide a **HELP** or **Search Tips** button. It's a good idea to click it and read about how to conduct your search. Not all search engines and directories are alike. Spending a few minutes learning about your search engine, before you begin your search, will save you time later on.

Basic Rules: Search Engines

- Search engines normally assume **AND** or **OR** between words. (That's Boolean logic). **AND** or **OR** can make a huge difference in the number and usefulness of the items you retrieve. Check the Search Tips to see how YOUR search engine works.
- Use quotation marks around a **phrase** – example: “community college.” A “community college” is entirely different than a “college community” or “college” **AND** “community.”
- Some search engines let you use a plus sign (+) in front of a term to indicate that the term must appear in your results. Also, some search engines let you use a minus sign (–) in front of a term to indicate that the term must NOT appear in your results. A tilde (~) may allow you to find synonyms for your terms.
- It is usually best to use all lowercase letters when searching. Otherwise, your search might be limited to words matching your capitalization.

Interpreting a Web Address

Here's an example of a Web address: <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/home.htm>

Each part of this Web Address has a meaning.

http://	www	.bls	.gov/	ncs/	home	.htm
hypertext transfer protocol	world wide web	Bureau of Labor Statistics	Government (US government)	National Compensation Survey	Home page for this document	Hypertext markup language

http:// (Hypertext transfer protocol) tells the computer how to read the code that it receives through the Internet. http is always followed by a colon (:) and two forward slashes (/). Hypertext just means that you can click on links that will take you to different information.

www (World Wide Web) tells YOU that you will be looking at graphical pages. This element is often omitted, and sometimes takes other forms.

A **period** in between **www** and **bls** separates the World Wide Web indicator from the next element (**bls**), a server found on the World Wide Web. Periods also separate the server from the domain name.

bls is the name of a server on the World Wide Web. We can guess that **bls** stands for Bureau of Labor Statistics, an office in the Labor Department.

.gov is the Domain Name. This domain name tells us that the server .bls is owned and operated by the U. S. government. A domain name provides a good clue for knowing who sponsors the site. Six common domain names in the United States are:

.com	.edu	.org	.gov	.mil	.net
Commercial site -not just business	Higher education (Colleges and Universities)	Non-profit organization	United States Government	United States Military	Network sites

You may also see some state sites, like this one:

<http://www.wnjp.in.state.nj.us>

This address has **nj.us** as a **domain name**. That's a sure way to know that **state** is a server belonging to the state of New Jersey, in the United States. (Hint for career research project: this is a site about jobs in New Jersey.)

Be aware that sites from other countries have other domain names. For example, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/> is a commercial site in Britain (the United Kingdom), belonging to the British Broadcasting Company.

Evaluation Questions:

Knowing how to read a Web address is important for evaluating its usefulness. Not all Web sites contain reliable content. As a Web user, **YOU must** evaluate what you find. Ask yourself these questions when you locate a Web page you may want to use:

1. Accuracy: Is the information correct? How do you know?
2. Authority: Is the information written by someone with educational or work experience that gives them expertise on the topic; is the person well known as an expert in that field?
3. Objectivity: Is the information fair, unbiased? Does the site present a balanced point of view, or acknowledge any slanted opinion? Is the site selling something?
4. Currency: Is the information up-to-date? Some things (election results, for example) change, and must be current. Other kinds of information (history of ancient Egypt) might be more stable. When was the information written? When was it posted to the Web? Downloaded?
5. Who is the target audience for this site? Think of the audience's age, gender, ethnicity, profession, special interests, or education level.
6. What organization is responsible for this site? What are the organization's credentials? Who is involved with this organization?
7. Scope of coverage: Does the Web page cover the whole topic in enough depth to give a

- thorough understanding; does it cover some aspect of a topic in context of the whole topic?
8. What questions does this site answer well? What questions does it leave unanswered?
 9. Compare the information in the Web site to information from the Career Database, the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Ferguson Career Encyclopedia or Barron's or Peterson's college books. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each source? Does your Web site contain information that confirms or contradicts these sources?

Exploration Exercises: Searching for Careers:

For these exercises, use UCC Libraries' Web Search page <http://www.ucc.edu/Library/WebSearch.htm> to find a list of all the popular and useful Internet search tools.

Career searching handout is found on the UCC Libraries' Library Instruction Page <http://www.ucc.edu/Library/InstructionAndResearchGuides/default.htm>

1. Go to <http://www.bls.gov> . Click on Occupational Outlook Handbook and click on the A-Z Index. Enter a search for a career that interests you. Print out your career article, and answer the following questions:
 - a. What would a day in the life of an average worker be like in the career you have chosen? What would your duties be? What kinds of problems would you face?

What part of the work seems the most appealing to you?

- b. How many people are employed in this career? Is that number greater or smaller than the number of people expected to work in that career in the future?
- c. What kind of education and training do you need to start working in the career? How much, and what kind of, additional education might you need to advance in your career?
- d. What are some careers that are closely related to the career you chose?
- e. What other sources of information are listed at the end of the article? Why is each of these sites especially useful for finding information about the career?

2. Using the Careers sites (<http://www.ucc.edu/Library/InstructionAndResearchGuides/UCC101FirstYearSeminar.htm>) find information about a self-assessment for career interests. Take the test to evaluate yourself. Then evaluate your site using the **Evaluation Questions**.

Using these sites to find information about a career that interests you. Evaluate your site using the **Evaluation Questions**.

Princeton Review: Career Quiz. <http://www.review.com/career/> Includes a career quiz regarding a student's interests and "usual style."

Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/quiz/>

Skills Profiler

http://www.acinet.org/acinet/skills_home.asp

Career Key

http://www.careerkey.org/asp/your_personality/take_test.asp

3. Using Yahoo, Google, or another search engine of your choice: Find career sites for your career from the Internet. Evaluate your site, using the **Evaluation Questions**.
4. Use Yahoo, Google, or Internet Public Library as a Directory to find career sites on the Internet. Evaluate your site using the **Evaluation Questions**.
5. Using the Occupational Outlook Handbook and Professional Association Web Sites recommended by the Occupational Outlook Handbook, try to find out what college major(s) are required or recommended for your proposed career.
6. Using information you found in Reference Books (See Catalog Exercise 3), go to the Web page of a college that offers your proposed major. Examine the college's Web Page, and evaluate it, using the **Evaluation Questions**. Does this look like a school you would like to transfer to? How does this information compare to the printed information from Barron's,

Peterson's or Lovejoy's? (Catalog Exercise 3)

- a. Search within that page, and print out a list of course requirements that you would have to fulfill to graduate from that college with that major.
 - b. Examine the course requirements list that you found. Using Google, see if you can find an online syllabus for a course that matches your description. It would really be best to find a syllabus from UCC, or from a school you are hoping to transfer to, but if you cannot find that, then find a syllabus from a similar course at any other college that lists, week by week, what topics you will study, what books you will read, and what tests, lab reports, term papers, projects, or other work you will be required to complete.
 - c. Self-evaluation: Is this a course that interests you? If so, how much outside studying or homework would be required for you to make a good grade in this course? What courses might you need to take to prepare for this course?
7. Using the UCC Catalog online, look for UCC courses that seem to match the course requirements for one of the colleges that you selected in Catalog Exercise 3.
 8. Use the Web site <http://www.njtransfer.org> and see if the UCC courses you selected will transfer to the colleges you have

been looking at. Do your courses transfer as fulfilling your major requirements? As electives? How many additional courses will you have to take to complete a major at each college that you are considering?

9. Sometimes students *do* get admitted to your first choice of a college. Using the information you gained from the exercises above, re-rank your college choices, and compare your choices for college transfer with the choices you made in Catalog Exercise 3. Have your choices changed? Remained the same? Explain what you have learned and how your thought process worked as you reconsidered your options.

