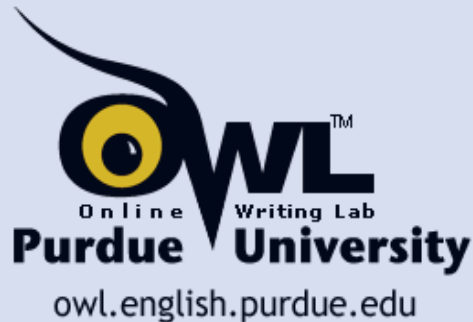


Conducting Online Research

Effective Online Research Strategies



Overview

- For effective online research:
 - know available search tools
 - understand how tools work
 - know how to use tools
 - evaluate results found with tools

Online Research

- Characteristics of the Internet:
 - large volumes of information
 - convenient
 - doesn't contain all information
 - potentially frustrating

Web versus Print: Web

- Web
 - anyone with web access can publish
 - author/affiliations and qualifications may be unclear
 - may not clearly identify external information
 - may be biased/misleading
 - publication info may not be listed

Web versus Print: Print

- Print
 - extensive publication process
 - clearly indicates author/affiliations
 - clearly marks outside sources/quotations
 - bias exists, but is reviewed
 - only qualified manuscripts accepted for publication
 - publication info clearly listed

Visible Web versus Invisible Web

- **Visible Web:**
content can be found using freely accessible search engines such as Google

- **Invisible Web:**
content not found by general search engines

Invisible Web vs. Visible Web: Practice

1. Write a topic on a piece of paper
2. Exchange it with a partner
3. Run one search in a general search engine such as Google
4. Run another search using a library research tool, such as JSTOR, EBSCOHOST, or Megasearch
5. Discuss the kinds of results each search turned up

Web Search Tools

- Search Engines
 - list results based on entered keywords
- Web Directories
 - offer categories for users to choose from
- Metasearch Engines
 - combine results from multiple search engines

Search Engine Results

- Based on:
 - site's amount of information
 - number of linking sites
 - number of people who choose a link
 - length of time in search engine database
 - code of the site

Search Engine Results

- Different search engines might return different results in a different order
- Can include results from paying advertisers:

The image shows a screenshot of a Google search for the term "owl". The search bar at the top contains "owl" and the search button is labeled "Search". The search results are displayed under the heading "Web" and show "Results 1 - 10 of about 30,200,000 for owl [definition]. (0.10 seconds)".

The organic search results include:

- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab - The OWL Family of Sites**
The Purdue University Online Writing Lab serves writers from around the world and the Purdue University Writing Lab helps writers on Purdue's campus.
[owl.english.purdue.edu/](#) - 5k - Nov 25, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages
[MLA Style Guide - The Writing Lab at Purdue](#)
[The OWL at Purdue - please contact our OWL Email Tutors](#)
[More results from owl.english.purdue.edu »](#)
- OWL Web Ontology Language Overview**
Part of the OWL W3C specification. Introduction of vocabulary and examples.
[www.w3.org/TR/owl-features/](#) - 84k - Cached - Similar pages
- W3C Web Ontology (WebOnt) Working Group (OWL) (Closed)**
WebOnt Working Group is part of W3C Semantic Web Activity. Its objective is to develop a standard ontology language for the Semantic Web.
[www.w3.org/2001/sw/WebOnt/](#) - 50k - Cached - Similar pages
[More results from www.w3.org]

The sponsored links section, highlighted with a red box, includes:

- Save on Night Owl Night V**
Explorer Pro Nightvision Binocular
Only \$574. Shop Night Vision
[www.bhphotovideo.com](#)
- Owl Optical Wallet Light**
Credit card sized magnifier & light
As seen on TV on sale for \$9.99
[www.theowlight.com](#)
- Owl Motion Gull Deterrent**
Cabin accessories
Boaters World
[www.BoatersWorld.com](#)
- Birdwatching Guide on DVD**
218 local birds with bird song quiz

Two red arrows point from the text "Paid Advertising in a Search Engine" to the sponsored links section.

Search Engine Results: Practice

1. Write a search topic on a piece of paper
2. Exchange the piece of paper with a partner
3. Enter the search term into three different search engines.
4. Discuss the difference in results with your partner

Conducting a Search

- Consider:
 - keywords that apply
 - what kinds of information you need
 - multiple angles
 - keep notes

Using Search Terms

- Do multiple searches
- Try keyword variations
 - e.g. try “dining hall,” “cafeteria,” and “campus food service”
- Be specific as you learn more
 - e.g. change “dining hall” to “Midwest university dining hall”
- Boolean Operators: words added to a search to make it more specific

Defining a Search: Boolean Operators

- AND
 - finds pages with all of the search terms used
 - e.g. “dining hall” AND “student workers”
- OR
 - finds pages with at least one of the search terms
 - e.g. “dining hall” OR “cafeteria” OR “campus food service”
- NOT
 - excludes pages that include the second term
 - e.g. Henry VII NOT Shakespeare

Defining a Search: Quotation Marks

- Return pages with exact matches
 - enter **dining hall**
 - Get: “As I was **dining**, I heard a noise coming from the **hall**”
 - enter “**dining hall**”
 - Get: “**Dining hall** food quality is assessed in this paper.”

Search Terms: Practice

1. Write a general search term on a piece of paper
2. Exchange it with a partner
3. Using the same search engine for the whole activity, run searches using:
 1. the original term
 2. synonyms of the term
 3. Boolean operators
4. Discuss with your partner how the results of each search were different

Evaluating Search Results

- Some results won't be helpful
 - wrong topic
 - not enough information
 - incorrect or outdated information
 - shallow or untrustworthy source
 - wrong tone for your project (e.g. an opinionated article when you need a basic overview)

Evaluating Search Results

- Have a clear idea of type of content needed
 - general overview
 - different viewpoints in a debate
 - in-depth explorations of a topic with numbers and statistics

Evaluating Search Results

- No precise formula
- Find out:
 - purpose
 - who is responsible
 - when last updated
 - whether information is corroborated in other places

Some Clues to Determine a Site's Purpose

- Tone and language used
- Assumptions/Generalizations
- Commercial/Non-commercial
- Advocating a particular opinion
- Copyright notice
- Links/Sources cited

Evaluating Search Results

- Domain name extensions
 - anyone can register .com, .net, .org domain names
 - not a great way to tell whether a source is “credible”
 - .edu and .gov can only be used by educational institutions and governmental institutions
 - still not necessarily reliable

Evaluating Search Results: Visuals

- Good design NOT an indicator of reliable information
- Bad design not an indicator of unreliable information
 - might be more likely to indicate an outdated website or one run by an individual

Wikipedia Articles

- Often one of the first results listed
- “Web versus Print” slides apply
- Check for instructors’ policies
- Can be useful for:
 - getting an overview
 - generating new ideas
 - pointing to other sources

Evaluating Sources: Using Wikipedia

- Example of sources and further reading in the Wikipedia Henry VIII article:

Sources

- *The New World* by Winston Churchill (1966).
- *The Reformation Parliament, 1529-1536* by Stanford E. Lehmberg (1970).
- *Henry VIII and his Court* by Neville Williams (1971).
- *The Life and Times of Henry VIII* by Robert Lacey (1972).
- *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* by Alison Weir (1991) [ISBN 0802136834](#).
- *English Reformations* by Christopher Haigh (1993).
- *Europe: A history* by Norman Davies (1998) [ISBN 978-0060974688](#).
- *Europe and England in the Sixteenth Century* by T. A. Morris (1998).
- *New Worlds, Lost Worlds* by Susan Brigden (2000).
- *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* by Alison Weir (2001).
- *British Kings & Queens* by Mike Ashley (2002) [ISBN 0-7867-1104-3](#).
- *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* by Alison Weir (2002) [ISBN 034543708X](#).
- *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* by David Starkey (2003) [ISBN 0060005505](#).
- *The Kings and Queens of England* by Ian Crofton (2006).

Further reading

- [John Sherren Brewer](#); Robert Henry Brodie; [James Gairdner](#). *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of Henry VIII*. London: [British Museum](#), and elsewhere. 1965 2d ed. ([TannerRitchie Publishing](#))
- Childs, Jessie. *Henry VIII's Last Victim: The Life and Times of Henry Howard, Earl of Suffolk*. London: [Penguin](#), 2006.
 - [Reviewed](#) by C.J. Sansom in [The Guardian](#), 21 October 2006.

Resources for Online Research

- [OWL Resource: Searching the World Wide Web](#)
- [OWL Resource: Evaluating Sources of Information](#)
- [OWL Resource: Copyright](#) determine which content you are allowed to use
- <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective/> (The Internet Detective—site with activities for developing critical online research and evaluation skills)

For More Information

- Contact the Purdue Writing Lab:
 - Drop In: Heavilon 226
 - Call: 765-494-3723
 - Email: owl@owl.english.purdue.edu
 - On the web: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

The End

