Finding Information & E-Mail

Worksheet 3 Reading Material

Before you start, read the following directions.

1. Read the questions in "Searching the Web" section of the other handout so you know what to look for.

2. YOU MUST read ALL the information and then answer the questions. If you just "skim" to find the answers, I will NOT accept your assignment and you will get a 0%.

3. Repeat these steps for each section of questions.

4. This worksheet should take 30-45 minutes to complete.

Searching the Web Online Information, Fact or Fiction How E-Mail works Anatomy of an E-Mail Smileys



Searching the Web

With billions of pages, you could spend a lifetime surfing the Web, following links from one page to another. Amusing perhaps, but not very efficient if you're seeking some specific information. So where do you start? Searching the Web requires part skill, part luck and a little bit of art. Fortunately, a number of free online resources help with the hunt.

You've probably heard of search engines such as Yahoo!, Google, and Bing. There are literally dozens of these tools to help you locate what you're looking for. The trick is understanding how they work so you can use the right one for the job.

Types of Search Engines

Search engines break down into two types: directories and indexes. Directories, such as Yahoo!, are good at identifying general information. Like a card catalog in a library, they classify websites into categories, such as accounting firms, English universities and natural history museums. The results of your search will be a list of websites related to your search term. For instance, if you are looking for natural history museums, you might use a directory to find it.

But what if you want specific information, such as biographical information about Leonardo da Vinci? Web indexes are the way to go, because they search all the contents of a website. Indexes use software programs called spiders and robots that scour the Internet, analyzing billions of web pages,



newsgroup and blog postings, and indexing all of the words. Some also index audio, video and images.

Indexes like Google and Bing identify the text on individual pages of a website that match your search criteria, even if the site itself has nothing to do with what you are looking for. You can often find unexpected gems of information this way, but be prepared to wade through a lot of irrelevant information too.

Search results are usually ranked in order of relevancy--the number of times your search term appears in a document--or how closely the document appears to match a concept you have entered. This is a much more thorough way to locate what you want.

Cable Cars to the Stars

Let's perform an online search using three popular search engines--Yahoo!, Google, and Ask--so you can see how they work and how you can develop an efficient search strategy.

Here's the challenge: You're planning a trip to San Francisco and you've always wanted to ride a cable car. Do they operate in January and if so, what's the schedule?

First we'll try Yahoo! One trick when searching is to narrow your focus. Entering "San Francisco" in the search box results in over millions of pages of information related to the City by the Bay! Entering "cable cars" also results in millions of pages, many of which have nothing to do with San Francisco. By combining the terms ("San Francisco cable cars") we've narrowed the search greatly. Now you have to visit each page to see if there's any information about cable car schedules. Fortunately, the first three sites listed all contain information pertinent to our search.

Now let's try using Google, an index-based search engine. Once again, enter "San Francisco cable cars" in the search box. The Google search results in millions of documents that match the search terms. The reason for this enormous list is that Google turns up every document that contains the words "San," "Francisco," "cable," and "cars."

To search for documents that contain just this phrase, use quotation marks around the terms ("San Francisco cable cars"). Doing this results in about 46,000 documents. Fortunately, Google smartly ranks sites in order of relevancy and popularity, so the first few have information about schedules.

But even better, try entering "San Francisco cable car schedule". Bingo! Now the list includes just a few sites. As you can see, the more specific you can be with your search query, the more focused the results.

Ask uses a technology called natural language query, a fancy way of saying that you can ask your question in plain English. By typing a question like "What is the San Francisco cable car schedule?" you get a list of related pages. Once again, you will have to go to the site, but in this case, it's a no-brainer as one of the choices is "San Francisco Municipal Railway." Bear in mind that websites tend to change often. These changes are not always reflected in the search engine database, particularly for directories. Typically, websites are registered with search engines when they first go online. After that, changes are not reported generally. To find the most recent information, your best bet is a search engine that use Web-indexing robots, software that constantly searches the Internet, recording additions and changes.

Refining Your Search

Regardless of which search engine you use, it pays to find out the particulars of how it works. Take the time to read the search tips on the site. For instance, how does the engine handle searches that include more than one word? Most engines, but not all, return results that include any of the words. Because there is so much information online, usually you will want to limit the scope of your searches. How do you do this? This is a good point to digress to talk about Boolean operators.

George Boole

The English mathematician George Boole developed an algebra of logic that has become the basis for computer database searches. Boolean logic uses words called operators to determine whether a statement is true or false. The most common operators are AND, OR and NOT. These three little words can be enormously helpful when doing online searches. A few examples show why.

- "cable AND car" Documents with both words
- "cable OR car" The greatest amount of matches; documents with either word
- "cable NOT car" Documents about cable, but not about cable cars; a good way to limit the search.

The exact syntax each engine uses varies, so familiarize yourself with each one's unique properties.

The Big Four

Whether you want to search for information about cable cars, investments or any other subject, remember, all search tools are not alike. Each uses a slightly different methodology, so your results will vary. You may not always find what you're looking for on the first try or with a particular engine. Here are four favorites (on the next page):



A final word of advice. The Internet may not be the best place to find certain information. While it abounds with computer-related subjects, it is not as good for historical information. The telephone and a sharp reference librarian may still be your best bet.



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Online Information, Fact or Fiction

Anyone with a computer and Internet access can become an electronic publisher, disseminating information to a global audience. While this new medium explodes with information, it also poses a vexing problem: What is the quality of the information? Just because a document, article or post appears online doesn't mean it contains accurate or reliable information. In fact online information demands closer scrutiny than for print publications.

Journalistic Standards

Newspapers, magazines and professional journals have a long tradition of journalistic standards to which they are held. Although many writers and publishers adhere to these standards when publishing on the Web, many don't. It's up to you to cast a critical eye, sorting fact from fiction, actuality from opinion. Whether you are reading a printed article or an electronic one, a healthy dose of skepticism is in order.

Why is this important? The Internet abounds with all sorts of information, but unless you can be reasonably sure of its source and accuracy, be wary. One example that made international headlines involved Pierre Salinger, a former





TWA Flight 800, which crashed after takeoff from New York's
 Kennedy airport, was shot down by a U.S. Navy missile. In fact
 he obtained his information from a posting on an Internet

correspondent for ABC News. He claimed to have information that

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newsgroup. Although the document contained great technical detail, there was no hard evidence to back up the allegation. In fact, this "information" had been

circulating on the Net for months before Salinger "discovered" it. He made the mistake of accepting gossip as truth, which proved to be professionally embarrassing.

While embarrassment is rarely fatal, more serious consequences can result from following medical or legal advice posted in blogs or on websites. While someone may be well-meaning in offering the information, can you trust it? Is this person a doctor, a lawyer or just an opinionated individual? Is the website affiliated with a reputable professional organization, such as the Mayo Clinic or American Bar Association, or some fringe group?

To help you evaluate information critically, we offer some guidelines:

Who is the author?

The first test involves authorship. Have you heard of the writer before? What is the reputation of the writer? Is he or she an acknowledged expert in this particular subject area? An article about the broadcasting industry written by Brian Williams will carry more credence than one by a rookie newscaster or blogger.

Most professional publications, including newspapers, magazines and trade journals credit the writer. Is there biographical information about this person? Is there a way to contact the writer (a phone number, mailing address or e-mail address) should you want additional information? Information presented anonymously should arouse suspicion.

On a more technical level, how well written is the article? Is it grammatically correct? Are there spelling errors? This may sound trivial, but it does give some indication whether the writer is a professional or an amateur and if the article was reviewed and edited.

Who is the publisher?

Since some articles on the Web may not attribute the writer, the next criterion to evaluate is the publisher of the website. Is this an organization you've heard of before? Does it have a presence in the real world, such as The New York Times and BBC? To assure accuracy, reputable publishers fact-check articles. Professional journals usually require peer review of articles.

Many publications, particularly blogs, just exist electronically. If this is the case, what can you find out about the publisher? What qualifies it to write about the subject? Does it have expertise in this area? This leads to the next criterion.

What is the point of view?

Rarely is information completely neutral; usually there's a point of view, maybe even a hidden agenda. Because it's so easy to publish on the Internet, opinions abound. Always consider the source of the information. For instance, articles you find on a corporate website most likely promote the interests of the company. Regard these as advertisements, not objective analysis. Likewise, information on a political website promotes the interests of the party and its candidates. Don't expect opponents to be treated fairly.

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Adapted from an old website called Learn the Net

Are there references to other sources?

Does the author cite other sources of information in the article? Are these sources reputable ones? Can you go to these sources to verify the information? Answers to these questions will help you decide on the reliability of the document in question.

How current is the information?

Finally, online documents should include the date when they were written or when they were last updated. It's important to know the timeliness of the information, because newer, more relevant information may exist elsewhere.

For further discussion of this issue, visit the World Wide Web Virtual Library, which contains an excellent set of resources for evaluating Internet information.



How E-Mail Works

It can take a day to send a letter across town and weeks to go around the world. To save time and money, you can't beat electronic mail. It's fast, easy and cheaper than using the postal service.

What is E-mail?

In its simplest form, e-mail is an electronic message sent from one device to another. While many messages go from computer to computer, e-mail can also be sent and received by mobile phones, PDAs and other portable devices. With email, you can send and receive personal and business-related messages with attachments, such as photos and documents. You can also send music, podcasts, video clips and software programs.

Let's say you have a small business with sales reps working around the country. How do you communicate without running up a huge phone bill? Or what about keeping in touch with far-flung family members? E-mail is the way to go. It's no wonder e-mail remains the Internet's most popular service.

Follow the Trail

Just as a letter makes stops at different postal stations along the way to its final destination, e-mail passes from one computer, known as a mail server, to another as it travels over the Internet. Once it arrives at the destination mail server, it's stored in an electronic mailbox until the recipient retrieves it. This whole process takes seconds, allowing you to quickly communicate with people around the world at any time of the day.

Sending and Receiving Messages

To receive e-mail, you need an account on a mail server. This is similar to having a postal box where you receive letters. One advantage over regular mail is that you can retrieve your e-mail from any location on earth, provide that you have Internet access. Once you connect to your mail server, you either download your messages to your computer or wireless device, or use your web browser to read them online.

To send e-mail, you need a connection to the Internet and access to a mail server that forwards your mail to its final destination. The standard protocol used

for sending Internet e-mail is called SMTP, short for Simple Mail Transfer Protocol. It works in conjunction with POP--Post Office Protocol--servers. Almost all

Internet service providers and all major online services offer at least one email address with every account.

When you send an e-mail message, your computer routes it to an SMTP server. The server looks at the e-mail address (similar to the address on an envelope), then forwards it to the recipient's mail server, where it's stored until the addressee retrieves it. You can send e-mail anywhere in the world to anyone who has an e-mail address. In fact astronauts on the international space station use e-mail to keep in touch with their earth-bound colleagues.

At one time, you could only send text messages without attachments via the Internet. With the advent of MIME, which stands for Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension, and other types of encoding schemes, such as UUencode, you can now send formatted documents, photos, audio and video files. Just make sure that the person to whom you send the attachment has the software capable of opening it.

Try This

Send yourself a message. Click on this link. Now type your address in the TO: field, then fill in the Subject field and write a note. Click the Send button. Your message should appear in your Inbox shortly.

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Google	× Q				
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COMPOSE	Primary	Social Gnew Google+, YouTube, Emi Promotions 2100/ Google Offers, Zagat Updates 2100/ Shoehop, Blitz Air			
Starred	Google+	new You were tagged in 3 photos on Google+ - Google+ You were tagged in three pl			
Drafts	🗌 🏠 YouTube	new LauraBlack just uploaded a video Jess, have you seen the video LauraBlack u			
Sent Mail	Emily Million (Google+)	[Knitting Club] Are we knitting tonight? - [Knitting Club] Are we knitting tonight?			
R = C P	Sean Smith (Google+)	Photos of the new pup - Sean Smith shared an album with you. View album be tho			
Search people	Google+	Kate Baynham shared a post with you - Follow and share with Kate by adding her			
Jenny Kang	🖂 🚖 Google+	Danielle Hoodhood added you on Google+ - Follow and share with Danielle by			
Peter H Jonathan Pelleg	YouTube	Just for You From YouTube: Daily Update - Jun 19, 2013 - Check out the latest			
Brett C	Google+	You were tagged in 3 photos on Google+ - Google+ You were tagged in three phot			
Max Stein	Hilary Jacobs (Google+)	Check out photos of my new apt - Hilary Jacobs shared an album with you. View			
Eric Lowery	Google+	Kate Baynham added you on Google+ - Follow and share with Kate by adding her			

Anatomy of an E-Mail Message

E-mail messages are similar to letters, with two main parts:

🖻 Your website - Message 👘 👘 🔲 🔲 🔀				
Eile Edit <u>V</u>	jew Insert Format Tools <u>A</u> ctions <u>H</u> elp			
🖃 Send 🛛 🛃	🗃 X 🖻 🖻 🗋 🚺 📜 📜 📮			
To	comments@learnthenet.com			
<u></u> c				
<u>B</u> cc				
Subject:	Your website			
Hello,				
of the internet. Maybe you can refer me to the right page or tell me where to find it.				
Thanks!				

It's True

The world's first e-mail message was sent in late 1971 by Ray Tomlinson.



The header contains the name and e-mail address of the recipient, the name and e-mail address of anyone who is being copied, and the subject of the message.

Most e-mail programs also display your name, e-mail address and the date of the message.

The body contains the message itself.

Just like sending a letter, you need the recipient's correct address. But with e-mail, spelling is critical. If you use the wrong address or mistype it, your message will bounce back to you--the old Return to Sender, Address Unknown routine.

An Electronic Postmark

When you receive an e-mail, the header tells you where it came from, how it was sent, and when. It's an electronic postmark.

Unlike a letter, which is sealed in an envelope, e-mail is not as private. It's more like a postcard. Messages can be intercepted and read by people who shouldn't be looking at it. Avoid including any confidential information unless you have a way to encrypt it. For more on this, read "How Private is Your E-mail?"

Smileys

When you talk to someone face-to-face, your body language, the tone of your voice, your inflections and facial expressions impart great meaning to what you say. These non-verbal cues may be more important than your words. You can personalize your written communication by using a smiley or emoticon--a "face" you create from keyboard characters. You'll be amazed at the range of emotions these little characters express.

Below are some of the more popular smileys.

:-) Нарру	:-I Indifferent	;-) Wink
:-(Sad	:-e Disappointed	8-) Somebody with
:-o Surprised	>:-< Mad	glasses
:-@ Screaming	:-D Laughing	

Abbreviations

While smileys add personality to your messages, abbreviations save keystrokes. Some common ones include:

< BFN > Bye For Now	< IMHO > In My Humble Opinion	
< BRB > Be Right Back	< LOL > Laughing Out Loud	
< BTW > By The Way	< OTOH > On The Other Hand	
< G > Grin	< ROTFL > Rolling on the Floor	
< HTH > Hope This Helps	Laughing < TOY > Thinking of You	
< IJWTK > I Just Want To Know		
< IJWTS > I Just Want To Say	< YMMV > Your Mileage May Vary	
Go out there and start communicating.		