Search Tips from our Search Experts, CCAC’s Librarians

Brad Coffield, Librarian at North Campus: I love using Google to find a quick piece of information, like the website of an organization, or the birth and death dates of an author. My best piece of advice for searching Google (and most other search engines) is to use quotes and other limiters. Using quotes allows you to find an exact phrase. Using a dash before a word will tell Google that you don’t want any results with that word (or phrase if you use quotes). When searching 8+ billion pages, it helps when you narrow things down!

Delia Rakoczy, Librarian at Boyce Campus: For internet searching, I like either Google or Yahoo as search engines. Google has become more intuitive in correcting spelling with a “did you mean (spelled word)” which helps a lot in locating information. They also have an “images” option in which you can put in a keyword and get pictures of the chosen topic. Yahoo is more directory oriented like the yellow pages, which helps to cut out a lot of the clutter, ads and junk websites. Both are good resources.

In locating information, I was trained with the Boolean operators so I always use “and” “or” as connectors with the keywords. Google has told me that I don’t need to do that, just the keywords and phrases are necessary. With a really broad topic it’s always good to specify. For example, let’s say you wanted a brief biography of John F. Kennedy. You could use the keywords “John F. Kennedy” AND biography. On the other hand, let’s say you wanted a database on children’s literature; you could use the keywords children’s literature AND database. Searching through the links will sometimes provide other links.

The library homepage has a link on evaluating a webpage. The subject directory of databases also has excellent links to websites related to the particular field, e.g. literature.

More Advice:

- Google gives the highest precedence to web pages that have other pages linking to it. For example, over 199 web pages link to www.ccc.edu, but over 6,700 web pages link to the University of Pittsburgh. Therefore, the University of Pittsburgh would appear higher on a results page than CCAC.

- When the term is in the title, heading or first paragraph, it increases the rank of the page within your results.

- Words that appear first are given higher priority than subsequent words. For example if you enter CCAC and Pittsburgh, Google will consider CCAC to be a higher priority term. Make sure you enter the most important search term, first.

- Repeated words are weighed higher than other words on the search term entry field.

- Google ignores many common words, such as the, a, an, am, etc. To prevent Google from ignoring the word place a “+” sign before the word.

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