

Business Research Tips is a monthly email with practical ideas for managing business information and research. Please feel free to forward this newsletter on to friends.

Web search tips

There are a few basic tips to keep in mind for web searching. The following are the shared thoughts of leading web search skills trainer, Mary Ellen Bates and the expert web search trainers interviewed by Greg Notess in his recent book, *Teaching web search skills: techniques and strategies of top trainers* (Notess, 2006).

- Start with who cares
It is important to consider who cares enough about the information they are providing free of charge on their web site to ensure that the information is accurate, current and reliable. Thinking about which site is the most likely source to provide the right answer to the question helps to direct the searcher to more authoritative sites, such as Government sources, rather than the first sites that appear in a Google search.
- Use more than one search tool
Google is great, particularly if you are restricting your search to Australian material. For comprehensive searches, try < dogpile.com > to search across google, yahoo, msn and ask. If looking for some guidance on alternative terms, and narrowing your search try < exalead.com >.

If you are using Internet Explorer 7, you can easily switch between search engines by adding additional search engines to the search toolbar. Click on "search options", and follow the directions to add the search engines of your choice.
- Know the advanced search capabilities of at least three search engines
The advanced features are helpful to restrict searches to particular phrases, or domain types, such as .gov, .edu or com. A very useful tool is searching within a domain, for example, using the Google search facility to search within any nominated web site.
- Use search directories
There are a very wide range of subject directories that direct searchers towards preferred sites, and often offer a brief summary of the site, such as a subject guide to information sources for Australian journalists. < <http://journoz.com/> >. Also keep a look out for directories compiled by specialist libraries.
- Evaluate the source
Take a few minutes to evaluate the web site you are referring to. Start with looking for information about the organisation behind the web site, and providing the information that is usually found in their "about us" section. One way to see if the site is well regarded as a reliable source is by the company it keeps. To see if other reputable organisations link to the site you are evaluating use the "links" feature in Google's advanced search options.