

Book Review

Teaching Web Search Skills: Techniques and Strategies for Top Trainers

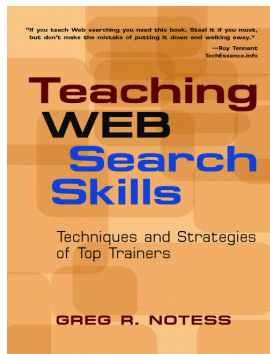
Author: Greg Notess. Published by Information Today, 2006.

Reviewed by Heather Carine, Carine Research, carineresearch@adam.com.au

Web search training is a key service offering for many independent information professionals. It's a valuable skill set to master: it helps to lift your profile, provides an alternative revenue source, and is an enjoyable way to share your knowledge on advanced web searching.

Reading "Teaching Web Search Skills" is like being in a room with leading trainers as they talk about how to plan, structure, and deliver web search training sessions to suit the needs of a challenging audience.

Greg Notess shares his considerable experience and practical approach to training,



along with the ideas and anecdotes of eleven other leading trainers who have taught web

searching to secondary and tertiary students, information professionals, and public and corporate library patrons.

Greg uses the experiences gained from this broad group of trainers

to capitalize on the point that there are a variety of ways to teach the same point. Each chapter is rich with examples of training tips and helpful stories from the experienced trainers.

Like any good public speaking guide, the early chapters cover understanding the audience, presentation methods, goal setting, and training session length.

His simple categories of novices, know-it-alls, and experienced users, combined with useful tips on how to train each category, provide a useful foundation for tailoring training sessions to suit the experience of the audience.

The pros and cons of hands-on sessions, versus lecture and demonstrations sessions, and online tutorials are explored. Effective tips are offered on using exercises to reinforce training points.

About one third of the book is dedicated to advice on shaping course content for web search training. In an attempt to bring some consistency, or at least highlight variations, there is a chapter devoted to terminology. It is helpful to have the terminology and alternative terms included within the body of the book, as it emphasizes the importance of being clear on the trainer's use of terms. There are many effective examples of how trainers treat similar terms, such as search engine and search index.



Heather Carine

Content on web search features, such as Boolean searching and primary concepts, are also covered in detail. As a trainer who has always included tips on research strategy, it was very interesting to see how other experienced trainers cover the research process.

The last few chapters of the book cover practical ideas, from how to create a framed workshop webpage, through to presentation tips, keyboard shortcuts, and making the most of multiple tab bookmarks and bookmarklets. Particularly helpful is an appendix of sample training material handouts used by various trainers.

There are some really nice "tales from the trenches" on the use of anecdotes, examples, and exercises to keep the training fresh, spontaneous, and apt to the age and make-up of the audience.

"Teaching Web Search Skills" is another practical guide for information professionals from the publishers at *Information Today*.