MAKING THE MOST OF INTERNET SEARCH TOOLS

Most people searching the Internet (more specifically the World Wide Web) rely on serendipity. They do achieve some measure of success but finding quality information should not happen by accident. Reliance on serendipity is not sufficient for a researcher.

The Internet is not as organized as, for example, a Library catalogue. Fortunately, there are ways through the maze of pages found on the Web. Search engines are the tool of choice for non-professional researchers. To single out one, the popular and innovative Google delivers relevant results quickly. Use of any search engine can be improved by learning its syntax and its advanced searching techniques. Several websites (see below) are devoted to reviewing search engines and offer the researcher up-to-date and practical advice. Experienced researchers will come to realize that search engines have limitations and they will need to understand the limits of search spiders or crawlers, the software that brings the material back to the search engine database.

The researcher should be aware that search engines are not the only tool for finding information on the Internet. Dubbed the “Invisible Web” is the material that cannot readily be found by traditional search engines. Much of this material consists of high-quality open-access databases that remain invisible to users of traditional search engines. Researchers should therefore learn about such alternative search tools. These include specialized, focused or site-specific search tools and portals known as subject gateways.

Additional significant Internet-based resources are proprietary databases, many targeting academics. Most academic libraries are able to subscribe to a selection of databases which are then available free to students and staff.

How can the Library help? A useful starting point is to go to [http://www.library.unp.ac.za/LinksUsingInternet.htm](http://www.library.unp.ac.za/LinksUsingInternet.htm) on the UNP Library website. We provide links to search engine review sites such as Search Engine Watch and Search Engine Showdown as well as to Internet guides and tutorials.

For specialized subject gateways go to Subject Links [http://www.library.unp.ac.za/LinksSubjects.htm](http://www.library.unp.ac.za/LinksSubjects.htm) on our webpage to find invaluable resource finders such as the Librarian’s Index to the Internet and Resource Discovery Network (RDN) and as well as subject specific gateways. For sites that collect content from the Invisible Web see “Further Internet Resources” overleaf.

For proprietary bibliographic databases - some offering the full-text of academic journal articles - subscribed to by the Library and available free to staff and students, see the online indexes available via our webpage at [http://www.library.unp.ac.za/id28.htm](http://www.library.unp.ac.za/id28.htm). These databases are directly relevant for academic research. Some databases enable the researcher to limit the search to peer-reviewed resources only.

The researcher needs to be aware of the tools available in order to choose the most relevant for efficient and effective ways of finding quality information on the Internet.

As we are constantly updating our website, we would welcome any suggestions for additions and enhancements. Please contact your Subject Librarian or our website coordinator, Jenny Aitchison (ext 5062, e-mail Aitchison@nu.ac.za).
Information on Land Issues at the Alan Paton Centre

Researchers and students needing information on land issues will find documentation on “Black Spots”, forced removals, resettlement and relocations at the Alan Paton Centre (APC). Much of this information is in the John Aitchison Collection, PC 14. This collection has recently been re-documented in great detail, so that it is easier to find what one is looking for. The Aitchison Collection also contains information on Selby Msimang, the Seven Day War and political violence in Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

Other collections which contain information on land issues are those of the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) (PC 29); Peter Brown (PC 16); Pat Merrett (PC 54); “Bunty” Biggs (PC 87); the Liberal Party of South Africa (PC 2) and Gerry Maré’s Natal Room Collection (PC 126). The Peter Brown Collection contains information on the origins of AFRA, and on the Church Agricultural Project (CAP) of Neil and Creina Alcock at Mdukutshani.

Anyone needing access to this information is welcome to visit the Alan Paton Centre between 08h30 and 13h00 or 14h00 and 16h30 on weekdays, or to contact the staff at tel. (033) 2605926 or 2606143, or by e-mail at koopmanj@nu.ac.za or liebbe@nu.ac.za

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FURTHER INTERNET RESOURCES


For searching the Invisible Web:

The Invisible Web
Directory of over 10,000 databases in 800 categories
http://www.invisibleweb.com/

Invisible-web.net
A companion to the book, The Invisible Web: Finding Hidden Internet Resources Search Engines Can’t See by Chris Sherman and Gary Price, it includes a directory of some of the best resources the Invisible Web has to offer.
http://www.invisible-web.net/
NEW REFERENCE WORKS

*R 291.0904 BRA*

*R 291.9 CHR*

*R 321.8 CLA*

*R 270.09 COH*

*R 810.9 PER*

*R 294.3 POW*

*R 302.2 SCH*

*R 306 SIM*

*R 230.07 TUC*

LIBRARY DATABASE PROJECT

Over the past few years Information Technology Division (ITD) and the Library have liaised and dealt with many problems in connection with the database machines in the Library. These computers are used by staff and students to access our electronic indexes and abstracts like EBSCOhost, Sabinet Online, and our CD-ROM indexes and abstracts.

Recently ITD decided to help solve some of the problems experienced by standardising the computer hardware running our bibliographic databases. After many meetings and much planning the project came into being this year. Our “old” database computers were swopped with those provided by ITD all running the same software and “locked down” to a certain profile to ensure little meddling with the system.

Now that the new system is up and running the number of problems we experience is minimal. Our thanks go to ITD personnel, with special thanks to Arthur Bajnath who followed the project through to the end.

CENTRE FOR AFRICAN LITERARY STUDIES TO JOIN CATNIP

The nucleus of this new Centre, attached to the School of Language, Culture and Communication on Pietermaritzburg campus, is the important African Literature collection of American academic Professor Bernth Lindfors (University of Austin, Texas). This unique collection, collected systematically over a period of 40 years, brings together in one place the published literature of almost an entire continent. It comprises over 11, 500 items. The book collection includes rare first-editions, English and Francophone novels and poetry, criticism, anthologies, reference works, biography and a valuable collection of children’s books. It also has near-complete back runs of about 350 journals, as well as audio visual material and photographs. It is hoped that the Centre becomes not only a regional and national research centre, but is also utilised as a world resource for the study of African literature.

The acquisition of this material is made possible not only through Prof Lindfors’ determination that this collection should be available in Africa, but also by funding from Atlantic Philanthropies, as well as contributions from the Department of Arts and Technology, Anglo-American Corporation and the University of Natal Research Fund.

The Pietermaritzburg Library will be adding the holdings of the collection to its regional catalogue network CATNIP (Cataloguing Network in Pietermaritzburg). This co-operative effort allows anyone who accesses the UNP Library catalogue to become aware of the wealth of resources available in the region. The CATNIP project is a model for library community outreach and co-operation. The Centre for African Literary Studies will become the 29th member of this network.
BOOK REVIEW

If you have ever wondered where the dictum “Form follows function” comes from, you might be surprised to find that it is from an essay on skyscrapers written by the architect Louis Sullivan in 1896. This is one of the many interesting facts to be found in John Heskett’s overview of the importance of design in our lives.

In his opening chapter he defines what he means by design and distinguishes it from fashions, styles and trends. For Heskett, design is “the human capacity to shape and make our environments in ways without precedent in nature, to serve our needs and give meaning to our lives” (p.7). His assertion is that design (good and bad), affects every aspect of all our lives but points out that for the purposes of his survey, the focus is on the objects, communications, environments and systems that surround people. He devotes a chapter to each of these.

After the introductory chapter already referred to, he traces the historical evolution of design from humankind’s first use of sticks, stones, shells and other natural objects to the postmodernist design that had established itself by the 1980s, the main characteristic of which Heskett describes as “an eclectic plethora of frequently arbitrary forms bearing no relation to utility” (p.33). In his next chapter he addresses the tension between utility and significance in design. “Form follows function” can be understood as the extent to which the form that something takes is an expression of the practical use to which it will be put. Tools and instruments are usually designed with utility in mind.

“Significance ... explains how forms assume meaning in the ways they are used, or the roles and meanings assigned them, often becoming powerful symbols or icons in patterns of habit or ritual.” (p.40)

He uses the toothpicks of the book’s title to illustrate the difference between utility and significance. The toothpicks designed and marketed by the Norwegian company Jordan are wooden wedges which can be used after a meal or after brushing the teeth for the purpose of oral hygiene. On the other hand, the traditional Japanese toothpick is a thin cylinder, pointed at one end and with incisions around the opposite end that might appear to have no purpose other than decoration. In fact, they enable the end to be snapped off easily and put onto the table at which formal meals are eaten. The used end of the implement is then laid onto the handle to prevent it from coming into contact with the table, in the same way as chopsticks are laid on special stands. This is one of many examples Heskett gives of the impact that different cultures have on design in all its manifestations.

The chapters on Objects (small and large), Communications (from print to multimedia), Environments (in which he focuses on interior workspaces) and Systems (such as transportation and its accompanying signage) indicate that the author is extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of his subject. He refers to a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century products and designers to illustrate the points he makes. Clear photographs are included in these chapters and in others that deal with the way in which design is used to create identity, how designers work and the contribution governments make to improving design, and lastly, the future of design.

The book is an accessible introduction to the subject written by an author who cares deeply about the impact of design on human lives. It concludes with a section entitled “Further Reading” in which Heskett recommends books that he feels will help readers expand their knowledge of this fascinating field. The list below includes some of his selections.

Related Readings

Aynsley, Jeremy
Nationalism and internationalism: design in the 20th century.
745.4442 AYN

Blaich, Robert with Janet Blaich
Product design and corporate strategy: managing the connection for competitive advantage.
658.575 BLA

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton
The meaning of things: domestic symbols and the self.
155.2 CSI

Dormer, Peter
Design since 1945.
745.4442 DOR

Forty, Adrian
745.2 FOR

Kelley, Tom
The art of innovation: lessons in creativity from IDEO, America’s leading design firm.
658.4063 KEL

Meggs, Philip B.
A history of graphic design. 3rd ed
741.609 MEG

Norman, Donald A.
The design of everyday things.
620.82 NOR

Jenny Aitchison