

## **Searching for Information Workshop #1, ITB W06**

### **Complete this part BEFORE the workshop**

Read through this entire handout. Make notes in the margin of any questions you have or additional thoughts and be prepared to share these at the beginning of the workshop.

1. Read the information about evaluating Internet resources at <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>. This link can also be found on the Assignments page of the ITB website. Note any questions or thoughts.
2. **Logging onto the campus computer network.** In order to work on the campus computer network and access the program share (where you can store all your files) you will need to log in. If possible, please go to the CAL or Computer Center and try this on your own.

When you registered at Evergreen, a computer account was automatically created for you. In order for you to access your account, you'll need your name and birthdate. For an example, let's use Homer Simpson, birthday 10/03/54. Follow the steps below to determine your login name and password.

- a. Take the first three letters of your last name (e.g. SIM)
- b. Add the first three letters of your first name (e.g. HOM) to the end (e.g. SIMHOM).
- c. Add your birthday as a two-digit number (e.g. 03) to the end (e.g. SIMHOM03). This is your login name.
- d. Your password is your birthday + 3 character month + two-digit year (e.g. 03oct54).
- e. So Homer's login is simhom03 and his password is 03oct54. Note that these are not case sensitive.

### **Searching for Information on the Internet**

There are two main types of Internet sources, Public & Private.

**The Public Internet** is what is accessed by most of the search engines on the web and it's free. The quality of information found on the Public Internet varies widely, from very trustworthy to completely biased and untrustworthy. Anyone can publish anything on the Public Internet, from professional or governmental groups whose information is likely to be very good to advocacy groups who are trying to sway your opinion or sell you something, to some crackpot publishing his/her personal theory/opinion.

The Public Internet is a grab bag that can sometimes pay off and other times can suck away hours of your precious existence.

**The Private Internet** consists of sites and databases that are available only to subscribers for a fee. The Private Internet includes scholarly journals, abstracting databases like Science Citation Abstracts, as well as numerous other sites. Just because sites charge a fee is not a guarantee of quality. However, much of the information on the Private Internet has been reviewed, edited, and approved by scholars and scientists knowledgeable in the particular field, so most of this information is reliable. The Evergreen library has subscriptions to numerous databases and journals and you should concentrate your searching here.

## Searching the Public Internet

There are a number of different *search engines* on the Web. You should try your search on several different ones because each search engine indexes web sites differently and will return different results. Here are several popular search sites:

- Google (<http://www.google.com>) This is a good first place to start. Clearly identifies sponsored links (sites that pay money to show up on searches).
- Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>) Searches the scholarly literature available on the web. You may be able to get the entire article or just read an abstract. A great resource.
- IxQuick (<http://www.ixquick.com>) One of several search engines that searches other search engines (called a meta-search). This is one way of searching a number of different search engines. Meta-searches may not give all the same sites as searching the individual search engines.
- InfoMine (<http://infomine.ucr.edu>) A search engine that only searches on scholarly, academic, and government sites.

One of the many tricks is to think of as many different ways you might state your topic. The search engines are looking for exactly the word(s) that you've typed in. Plurals can give a different result. Putting several words together inside quotation marks will locate only pages or documents where those same phrases occur.

Another useful trick is to open multiple windows in your browser so that you can have several searches or web pages open at the same time.

### Is this information any good?

One of the great difficulties in using the Internet is that it is often difficult to determine the quality of the information you find.

### Types of Web pages

There are five main types of web pages and the informational content can vary widely among them.

1. **Advocacy web pages.** An Advocacy Web Page is one sponsored by an organization attempting to influence public opinion (that is, one trying to sell ideas). The URL address of the page frequently ends in .org (organization). Examples: National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, the National Right to Life Committee, the Democratic Party, the Republican Party
2. **Business/Marketing web pages.** A Business/Marketing Web Page is one sponsored by a commercial enterprise (usually it is a page trying to promote or sell products). The URL address of the page frequently ends in .com (commercial). Examples: Adobe Systems, Inc., the Coca-Cola Company, and numerous other large and small companies using the Web for business purposes.
3. **News Web Pages.** A News Web Page is one whose primary purpose is to provide extremely current information. The URL address of the page usually ends in .com (commercial). Examples: USA Today, Philadelphia Inquirer, CNN
4. **Informational Web Pages.** An Informational Web Page is one whose purpose is to present factual information. The URL Address frequently ends in .edu or .gov, as many of these pages are sponsored by educational institutions or government agencies. Examples: Dictionaries, thesauri, directories, transportation schedules, calendars of events, statistical data, and other factual information such as reports, presentations of research, or information about a topic.
5. **Personal Web Pages.** A Personal Web Page is one published by an individual who may or may not be affiliated with a larger institution. Although the URL address of the page may have a variety of endings (e.g. .com, .edu, etc.), a tilde (~) is frequently embedded somewhere in the URL.

## Criteria for evaluating information

There are five criteria that should be applied to *any* source of information.

### 1. Accuracy

- How reliable and free from error is the information?
- Are there editors and fact checkers?
  - Almost anyone can publish on the Web.
  - Many Web resources not verified by editors and/or fact checkers.
  - Web standards to ensure accuracy not fully developed.

### 2. Authority

- What are the author's qualifications for writing on the subject?
- How reputable is the publisher?
  - Often difficult to determine authorship of Web resources If author's name listed, his/her qualifications frequently absent.
  - Publisher responsibility often not indicated.

### 3. Objectivity

- Is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
- To what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience?
  - Web often functions as a virtual soapbox.
  - Goals/aims of persons or groups presenting material often are not clearly stated.

### 4. Currency

- Is the content of the work up-to-date?
- Is the publication date clearly indicated?
  - Dates are not always included on Web pages. If included, a date may have various meanings:
    - Date first created
    - Date placed on Web
    - Date last revised

### 5. Coverage

- What topics are included in the work?
- To what depth are topics explored?
  - Web coverage may differ from print or other media coverage

Much of this information came from the web page *Evaluating Web Resources* by Jan Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate. For additional information on evaluating specific types of web pages, including checklists for each type, please see [http://www.widener.edu/Tools\\_Resources/Libraries/Wolfgang\\_Memorial\\_Library/Evaluate\\_Web\\_Pages/659](http://www.widener.edu/Tools_Resources/Libraries/Wolfgang_Memorial_Library/Evaluate_Web_Pages/659)

## Searching the Private Internet

Papers in scientific journals have been subjected to *peer review*, which means that other researchers who are working in the same field and are familiar with current research have read the paper and given comments to the author who then makes suggested changes. In order for a paper to be published in a peer-reviewed journal it *must* have passed the review. This ensures a higher quality of information and credibility.

Evergreen subscribes to a number of different databases that compile information about scientific papers and books, which can be searched for a particular topic. For medical topics, *Medline* and *Science Citation Index* are good places to start. There are others you might want to search, look at the list of what's available. To find these resources:

1. From the Evergreen web site, choose "Academics".
2. Choose "Library" from the Academics page.
3. Select "Library Catalog" from the Library home page

4. Select “Reference & Journals” from the Library Catalog page
5. Use the letters at the top to jump to the appropriate part of the list and scroll to find the database you want.
6. Once you have done your search, mark the references that are interesting to you to create a “Marked List”. This list can then be emailed to you or copy and pasted into a Word document (this is what I usually do to make it easy to order papers).
7. Check out the “Meta-find” database, which will search most of the databases that contain full-text journal articles all at the same time.

## **How do I get a paper once I’ve found it?**

Many of the journals are available electronically. After you locate an interesting paper, you can often directly link to a search of the Evergreen library and see if we have a full-text electronic subscription. If we do, you can read the article or download a PDF file (recommended) and save it. If we don’t have the journal you can request it through Inter-library loan.

Inter-library loan (ILL) allows you to order copies of papers directly from the computer. You must first establish an account (free) before you can request papers. Access ILL from the “Reference & Journals” web page. After establishing your account, you can order copies of papers. (Helpful Hint: If you’ve copied your search results into a Word file, you can have it open at the same time and copy and paste the journal name, article title and authors into the ILL form.

## **“Hanging Ten” while surfing the Net**

### ***Setting up your computer workspace***

To work effectively, it’s helpful to set up your computer to help you keep track of the information you find. Having several applications open at the same time, as well as multiple windows in your browser, will be very helpful.

Open your browser and set this page to the Evergreen library catalog page.

Go to the File menu and open another browser page and go to Google on this page.

Get in the habit of opening new pages for new searches so that you can switch back to a previous search easily.

Open a blank Word document, name this file “Search Notes Jan 10” and save it in your folder on the ITB program share. Use this file to copy and paste URLs for interesting web pages, make notes, copy citations etc. Copy and paste whenever possible. *“Typing is a primitive behavior.”* Przybylowicz 1999

### ***Digging for info***

1. Go to Google and type in “anabolic steroids.” Open another window and do the same search in IxQuick. Compare the results and find at least one example of each type of web page and list the URL below.
  - a. Advocacy web pages
  - b. Business/Marketing web pages
  - c. News Web Pages
  - d. Informational Web Pages
2. Refine your search to the health effects of anabolic steroids. Type “anabolic steroids” + “health effects” + review
3. Go to Google Scholar and InfoMine and repeat steps 1 & 2.
4. Practice marking some papers and copying your marked list into a Word document that you save onto your disk.