

Finding Cyberspace Sources: Searching the World Wide Web

Another valuable resource is the World Wide Web. To understand the logic of Web search engines, you need to know that the Internet is divided into restricted sections open only to those with special access rights and a “free-access” section. **Web engines such as Google search only the free-access portion of the Internet.** When you type keywords into a Web search engine, it searches for matches in material made available on the Web by all the users of the world’s network of computers—government agencies, corporations, advocacy groups, information services, individuals with their own Web sites, and many others. **You are likely to receive many more hits in a Web search than in a licensed database search, but the quality of sources may vary.** For example, when Kent typed *Call for National Service* into Google, he got more than 500,000 hits. Although it would be impossible for any researcher to examine all these hits, **the first few screens often turn up valuable leads.** Here, for example, are several sources that showed up in the first two screens of Kent’s Google search:

- A Web site “United We Serve” from a government Web address (.gov)
- An article entitled “A Call for National Service” from the Web site of a magazine entitled *The American Interest Magazine*
- A news story from the Web site of William and Mary College (an .edu site) titled “W&M joins call for national service initiative”
- An article from the Web site of the Aspen Institute (a .org site) describing the “Franklin Project” devoted to promoting voluntary public service
- An op-ed piece from the *Wall Street Journal* by General Stanley McChrystal calling for national public service
- A blog post entitled “General McChrystal’s Un-American Call for Universal National Service” from a blog site entitled “The Objective Standard”

FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

Comparing a Licensed Database Search and a Web Search

Working in small groups or as a whole class, see if you can reach consensus on the following questions:

1. How does a licensed database search differ from a Web search? Explain what is being searched in each case.
2. Of the six Web items from the first two screens of Kent’s Google search (listed above), which might also show up in a licensed database search? Which would never show up in a licensed database search? (For Web-only sites that would not show up in a licensed database, readers must take particular care to analyze the Web site rhetorically. Skill 19.3 in the next chapter will help you do so.)
3. Which of the six items seem particularly valuable for Kent to examine as part of his initial research? Why?

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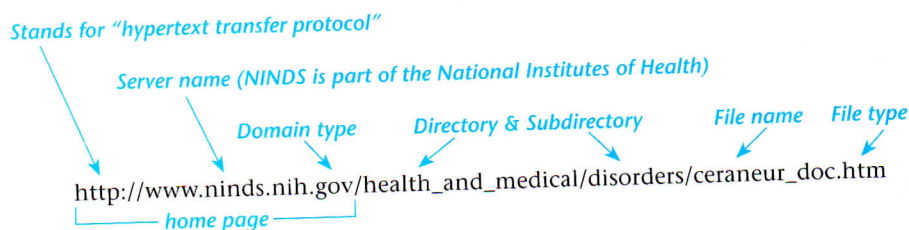
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Using Web Search Engines Different search engines search the Web in different ways, so it is important that you try a variety of search engines when you look for information. For example, a service offered by Google is "Google Scholar," with which you can limit a Web search to academic or scholarly sources. (But you will still need to turn to your library's collection or licensed databases for a full text of the source.) On campus, reference librarians and disciplinary experts can give you good advice about what has worked well in the past for particular kinds of searches. On the Web, an additional resource is NoodleTools.com, which offers lots of good advice for choosing the best search engine.

Determining Where You Are on the Web As you browse the Web looking for resources, clicking from link to link, try to figure out what site you are actually in at any given moment. This information is crucial, both for properly documenting a Web source and for reading the source rhetorically.

To know where you are on the Web, begin by identifying the home page, which is the material to the left of the first single slash in the URL (universal resource locator). The generic structure of a typical URL looks like this: `http://www.servername.domain/directory/subdirectory/filename.filetype`.



When you click on a link in one site, you may be sent to a totally different site. To determine the home page of a site, simply note the root URL immediately following the "www."* To view the home page directly, delete the codes to the right of the initial home page URL in your computer's location window and hit Enter. You will then be linked directly to the site's home page, where you may be able to find an "About" link through which you can gather information about the purpose and sponsors of the page. As we discuss in later chapters, being able to examine a site's home page helps you read the site rhetorically and document it properly.

*Not all URLs begin with "www" after the first set of double slashes. Our description doesn't include variations of the most typical URL types. You can generally find the home page of a site by eliminating all codes to the right of the first slash mark after the domain or country name.