

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNET

Internet Express 2: Searching

Today we will focus on how to find web sites and information on the Internet using a search directory called the Internet Reference Desk and two search engines: Yahoo! and Google.

I. Internet Reference Desk

A search directory is a list of web pages chosen by a person or organization and categorized by subject. The purpose of a directory is to simplify searches by providing a selection of web sites that provide quality information about specific topics.

Gail Borden Public Library offers a search directory called the Internet Reference Desk (www.gailbordenreference.pbwiki.com). You may also bring it up by visiting the library's public web page (www.gailborden.info), clicking on "Research," and then clicking on "Internet Reference Desk. This site is a wiki, as its URL indicates. A wiki is a web site that allows a group of people to edit, delete, or otherwise modify the content of that site.

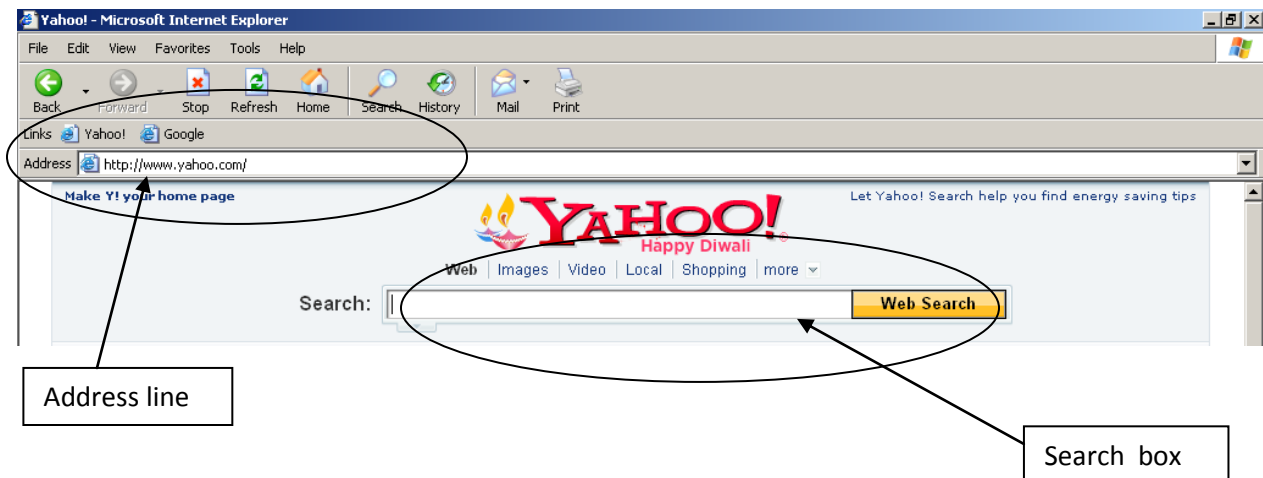
All the categories in the Internet Reference Desk directory offer multiple sites related to the topics listed. Gail Borden librarians chose the web sites on this page because they were deemed current, relevant, and trustworthy. Categories include: Reference Sources; En Espanol; Business and Consumer; Education; Entertainment and Hobbies; Geography and Travel; Government and Law; Health, Science, and Math; History and Genealogy; Religion; and Internet.

A sample search for a specific illness using the Internet Reference Desk would involve clicking on the "Health and Medicine" link under the "Health, Science and Math" category. Several sites are available, all of which are from reputable organizations. MedlinePlus, provided by the National Institutes of Health, is an especially informative site. After clicking on the MedlinePlus link, type an illness or condition in the search box found at the top of the page. Many articles appear as a result of the search. On the left a box sorts those articles into categories to aid your search.

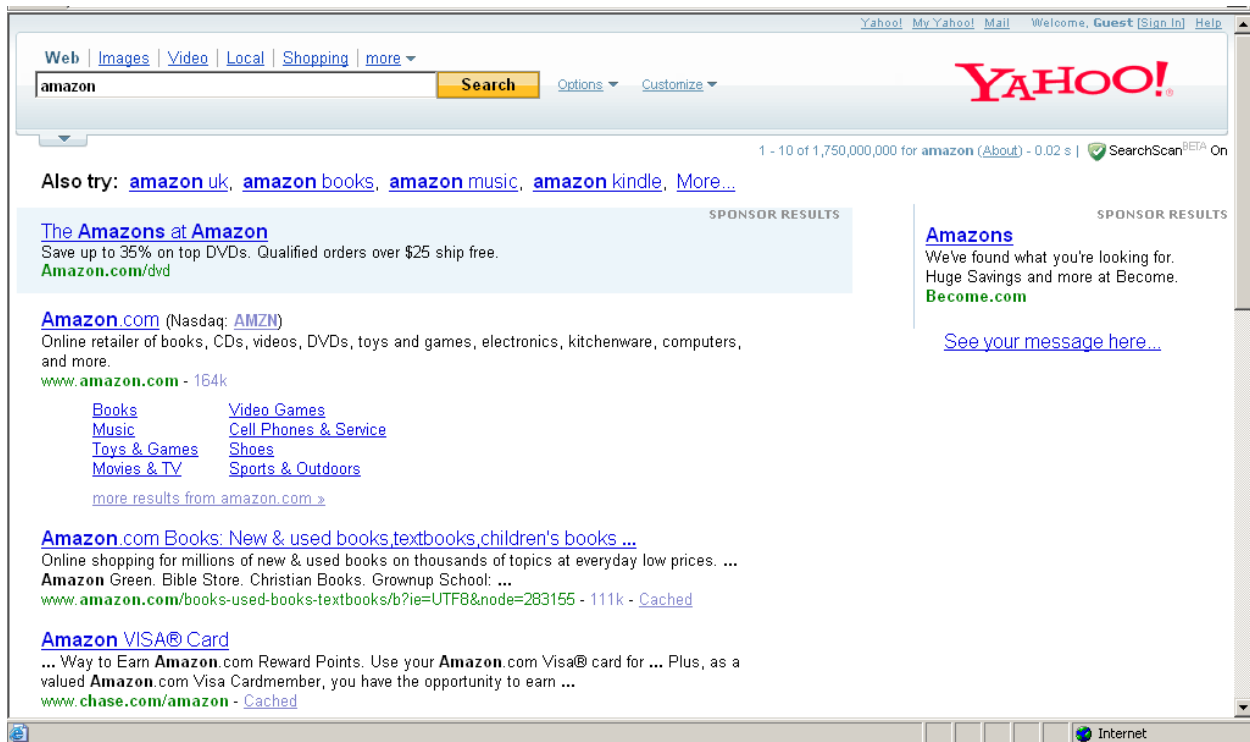
II. Yahoo!

Another type of web site that helps you find web pages containing the information you need is called a search engine. There are many, many search engines available, but Yahoo! and Google are among the most popular. To search Yahoo!, type "yahoo.com" in the address line at the top of the search page.

After the Yahoo! screen appears, you are ready to begin a search. Because many people initially make the mistake of typing addresses and searches in the wrong boxes, it is important to distinguish between the address line and the search box. They look similar because both are blank white boxes, but they serve two different purposes. The address line appears in the group of buttons and menus above the actual screen where sites appear. The search box appears in the Yahoo! site's body. The address line is used when you already know a web site's address. The address is typed in the address line and no spaces are included in an address. The search box appears just below the Yahoo! name at the top of the Yahoo! web page. The search box is used when you are asking a search engine to go out and find information based on words typed in its box. Each word typed in a search box is separated by a space.



A practice search in Yahoo! might be for the Amazon River. By typing the word "amazon" in the search box and either pressing enter or clicking on the search button at the end of the search box, over 1.6 billion "hits" appear.



Notice that just below the search box Yahoo! offers suggestions of words to add to the word “amazon” to narrow the search. By adding additional words to the search box, the search engine is able to eliminate many sites that do not apply to the new search. By clicking just behind the word “amazon” in the search box and then tapping the space bar, the word “river” can be typed. Again, press enter or click on the search button. The results have been reduced from over 1.6 billion to around 55 million.

Advertisements appear along the right side under “Sponsor Results” or highlighted in blue at the very bottom of the page.

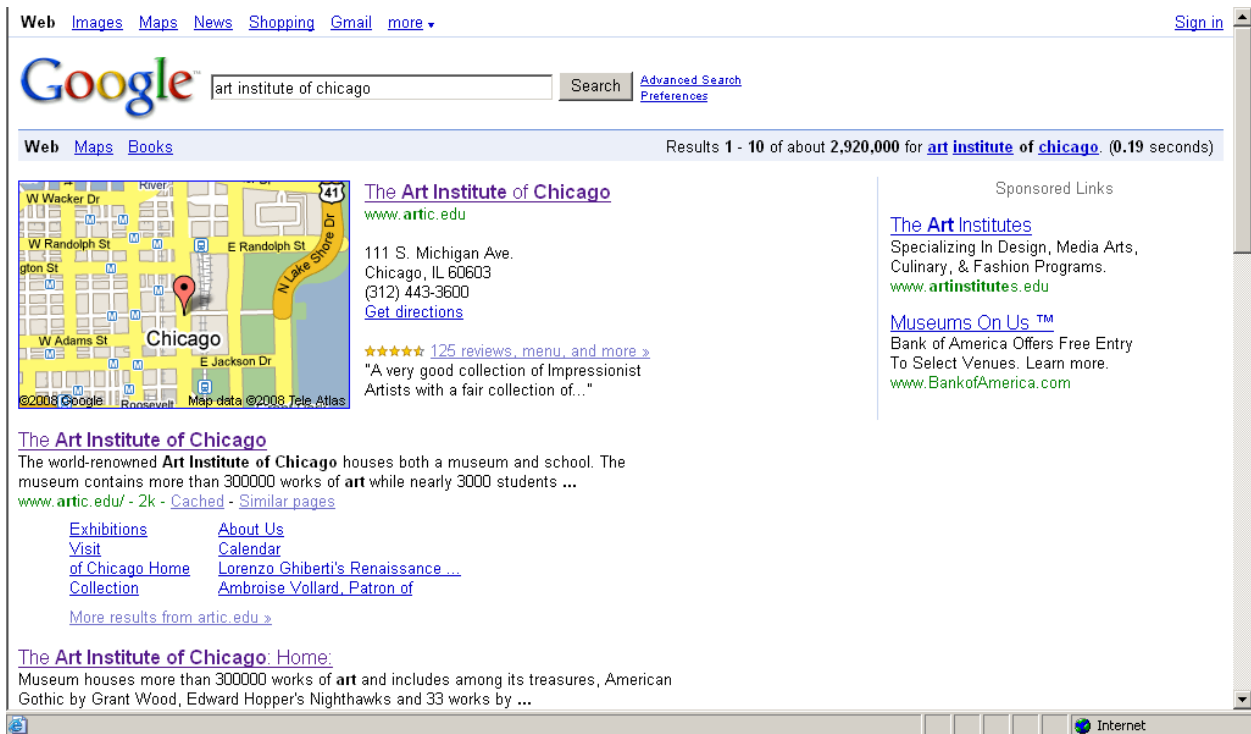
Search engines automatically search for all of the words in a search box so there is no need to type “and” between the search terms. The terms are searched for separately, so they will not necessarily appear right next to each other or in the same order as they were typed. A search engine uses powerful computers to rummage through web sites looking for the terms listed in each search. The engine then uses a complicated formula to determine what web pages should appear as a result of the search. Since search engines are constantly searching web sites, search results may vary from day to day. Also, web pages may be changed, be unavailable for a while because of computer and/or network problems, or disappear entirely.

If pop-up ads (those annoying boxes offering unsolicited information) appear, click on the small “x” in the top right corner of each one to close them.

III. Google Web Searches

To reach the Google search engine, type “google.com” in the address line and then press enter. Google is probably the most popular search engine available. Its home page is much cleaner than Yahoo! since its focus is on the search and not all the other things Yahoo! offers. Also, pop-up ads are not generated.

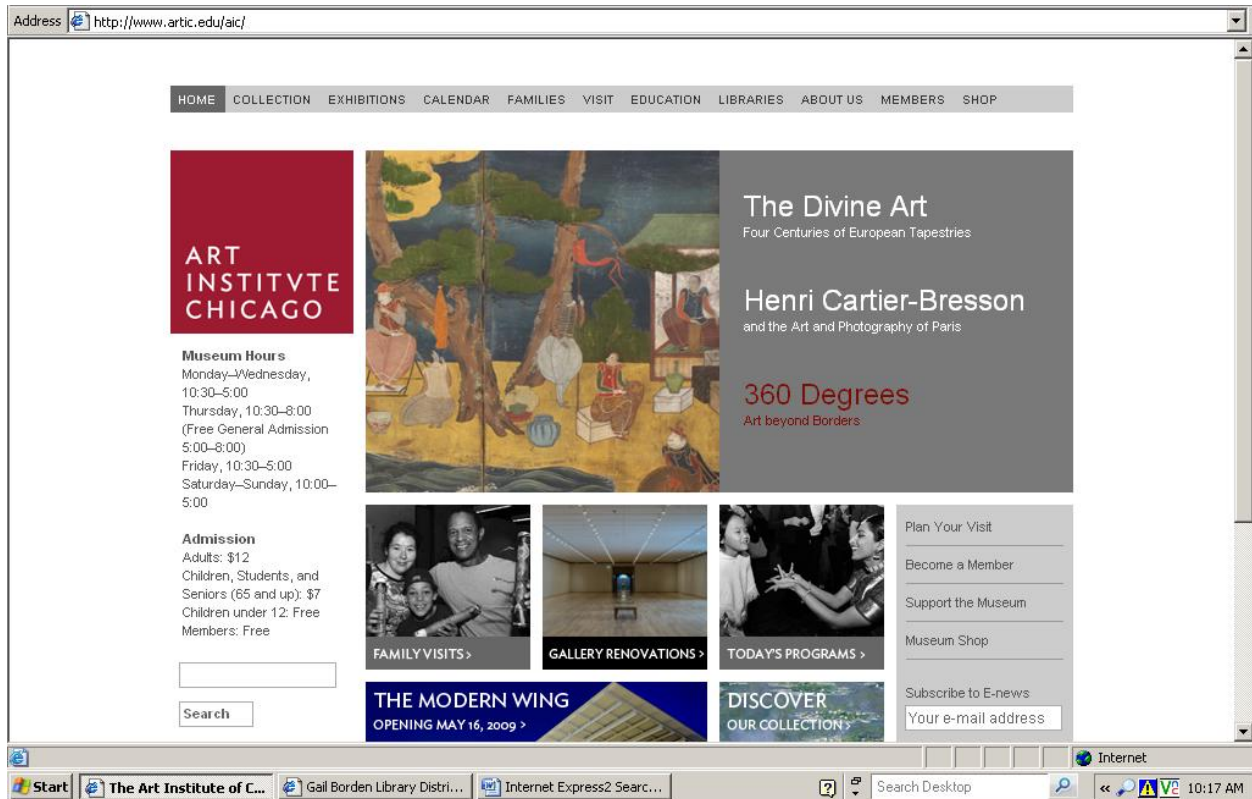
To test the Google search engine, try to find what is on display at the Art Institute of Chicago. In Google’s search box type: art institute of Chicago (capital letters are unnecessary). Press enter or click on “Google Search” just below the search box. A click on the “I’m Feeling Lucky” button causes Google to open the first result in your list. That would probably bring up the wanted web site with this search, but usually a person wants to see at least the first page of sites. When searching for more than one word, type in the most important search term first. Google places more importance on the search term(s) that are typed in first.



Above the search results, Google displays how many results came up. It also underlines the search terms it looked for. Because “of” is such a common term, it left that word out of the search. If any ads appear in Google, they will be highlighted in blue on the top of the web page or be listed under “Sponsored Links” on the right side of the page.

Click on the website: www.artic.edu. The first page allows you to choose between the school and the museum. Note that both the words and the pictures are links. A click on “the museum” brings up the home page for the museum at the Art Institute of Chicago. The

third item along the top menu bar of the web page is the word “Exhibitions.” Click on that and then the first item in the list, “Current Exhibitions” to learn what is presently being displayed.



IV. Phrase Searching

Phrase searching tells the search engine to look for two or more words together as they are typed. To accomplish this, the words must be enclosed in quotation marks. To insert a quotation mark, hold down one of the shift keys on the keyboard and, at the same time, press the key to the left of the “Enter” key. Searching for a phrase in quotes brings up only the web pages in which your search terms appear exactly as they were typed in the search box. This makes it more likely that the search results will bring up the expected results. Searching for Art Institute of Chicago using quote marks eliminates quite a few sites.

This method works quite well when searching for a song or poem when only a few words are remembered.

V. Evaluating Web Pages

Anyone with a computer, an Internet connection, and some know-how can put a web page on the Internet. Because of this, not everything on the Internet is trustworthy. Here are some criteria to use in deciding if a web page is worthwhile.

- Authority: Who provided the web page? Does the person/business/organization have a physical address, phone number, and email address listed? If scholarly or scientific information is listed, is the information's sources listed on the page?
- Accuracy: Are there blatant factual or spelling errors, or does the information seem credible?
- Objectivity: Are facts presented fairly, or does the page only present one side of an issue?" Is the intent of the page clearly stated?
- Currency: Does the web page list when it was last updated? Are the links current?
- Content: Is the page designed for easy navigation or is it overrun with ads? Does it include the information needed?

The Art Institute of Chicago Museum's web site lists a physical address, phone number, and email address. It appears to offer trustworthy information about the museum's collections and other offering. The Institute went to a lot of work to make the site easy to navigate and locate needed information. The web site meets the criteria for a trustworthy site.

VI. Other Google Options

Google's home page is very clean, but it offers links to other options at the top left-hand side of the screen above its name. To view an image of a person or thing, merely click on "Images and then type the item being searched for in the search box. Often several pages of images will appear. Other links are for the latest news as well as Google's email (Gmail). Clicking on the more button brings a drop-down menu of additional items to explore.

VII. How to Learn More

To learn more about searching in Google, click on "About Google" found below the search bar and then on "Help."

Yahoo! also offers a "Help" page found by scrolling to the bottom of their home page and clicking on "Help."

To find this class outline after the class session is over, it is available on the library's public home page (www.gailborden.info). Click on "Services," found in the gray bar at the top of the page. Under that menu is "For Computer Users," and then "Introduction to the Internet." All three classes offered by Adult Services are located there.

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