



## Tales from the Terminal Room December 2011, Issue No. 99

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Tales from the Terminal Room (TFTTR) is an electronic newsletter that includes reviews and comparisons of information sources; useful tools for managing information; technical and access problems on the Net; and news of RBA's training courses and publications. Many of the items and articles will have already appeared on Karen Blakeman's Blog at <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/>

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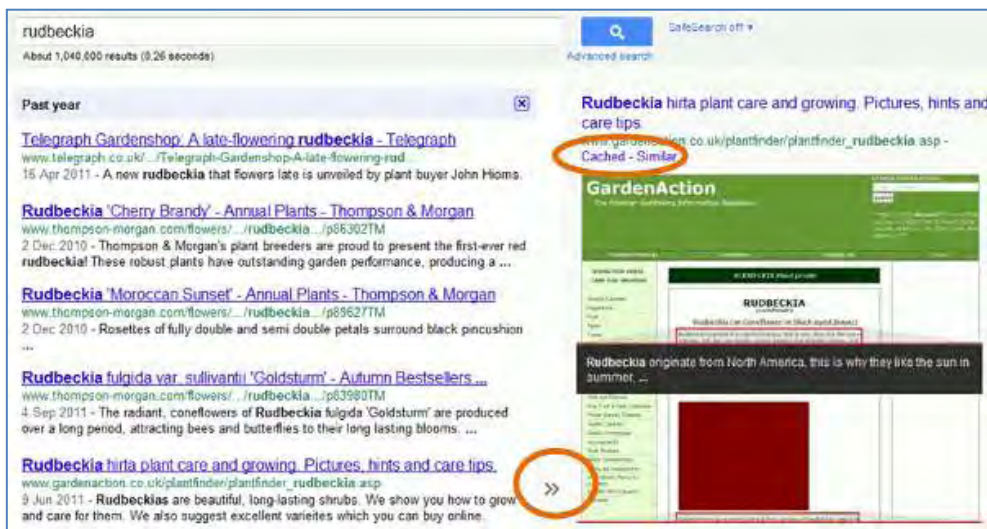
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## Search tools

### Google de-clutters results

Google has been busy de-cluttering its web results page again. The 'similar' pages link disappeared from entries on the results page a while ago and was moved to the preview copies of results pages. Now the cached link has gone as has the magnifying glass for the preview. Hover over a result, though, and a double arrow appears to the right of it. Click on the arrow and the preview copy appears along with the 'Cached' link and sometimes a 'Similar' link.

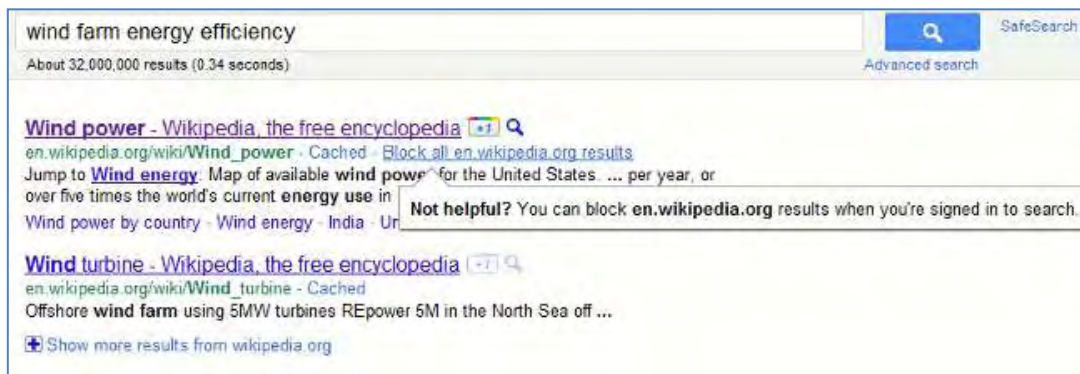


I've noticed that fewer and fewer pages have a Similar link, which makes me wonder if Google will do away with it all together in the not distant future. If Google carries on at this rate there won't be anything on the results page at all!

**Please note:** this is what I see on my screen. What you see on yours may be totally different.

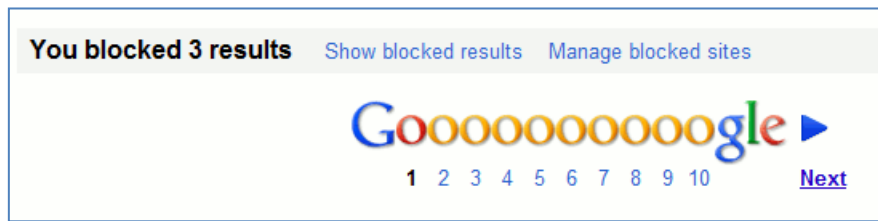
### Build your own web naughty list on Google

Google first announced that it was introducing an option for users to exclude web sites from results in March of this year (Google lets you create your own naughty list <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2011/03/12/google-lets-you-create-your-own-naughty-list/>). Then it disappeared, reappeared, disappeared and then reappeared for some people and only if you were logged in to a Google account. Now it is back for everyone. Run a search, view a result and then use the back button to get back to your results list. You should now see a link next to the result offering to block all further pages from that site.



If you are not already logged in to a Google account you are prompted to do so.

Next time you run a search that would normally include pages from a blocked site, Google displays a message offering you the options to show the blocked results or to go to 'Manage blocked sites' where you can unblock them altogether.



You can also manage your blocked sites by going to your Google account dashboard.



Be warned: this does not only affect your results. Google.com is using this data as part of their general search ranking algorithms "to help users find more high quality sites". This may be extended to other countries in the future. So don't block sites unless you really mean it. If you want to remove a site from just one particular search then use the site: command prefixed with a minus sign in your search strategy. For example -site:wikipedia.org

The original announcement can be found at "Hide sites from anywhere in the world – Inside Search" <http://insidesearch.blogspot.com/2011/09/hide-sites-from-anywhere-in-world.html>

## Google: Verbatim for exact match search

Well it looks as though the user feedback to Google on the discontinuation of the +/plus sign for enforcing an exact match search has paid off. Google removed the plus sign as a web search option a few weeks ago and told searchers to use double quotes around terms instead. The double quote marks option does not always force an exact match and increasingly Google is ignoring them and making some of your search terms optional. (See my blog posting Dear Google, stop messing with my search, <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2011/11/08/dear-google-stop-messing-with-my-search/>). The official reason for the change was that hardly anyone used it: the real reason has become clear with Google implementing its Google+ Direct Connect Service. This enables you to go direct to an individual's or company's Google+ page by prefixing their name with the plus sign, for example +BASF. This function worked for a short time but now seems to vanished as well.

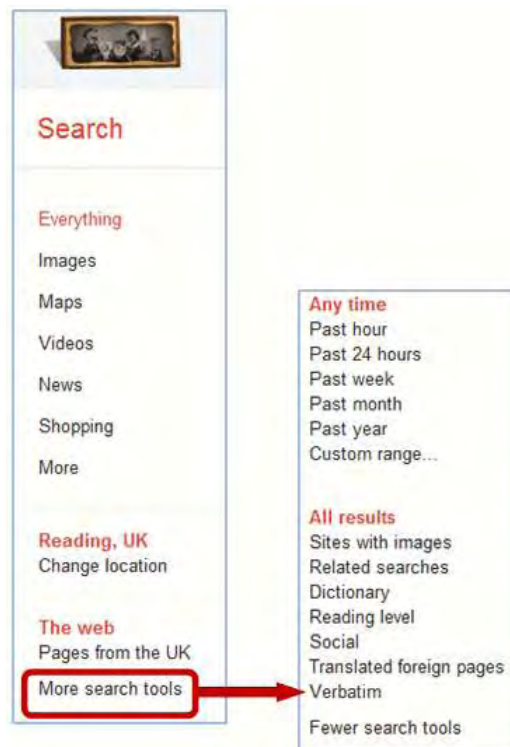
For those of us who really do NOT want Google to second guess what we are looking for there is now a Verbatim command. Google's Inside Search blog (<http://insidesearch.blogspot.com/2011/11/search-using-your-terms-verbatim.html>) says:

*" With the verbatim tool on, we'll use the literal words you entered without making normal improvements such as*

- *making automatic spelling corrections*
- *personalizing your search by using information such as sites you've visited before*
- *including synonyms of your search terms (matching "car" when you search [automotive])*
- *finding results that match similar terms to those in your query (finding results related to "floral delivery" when you search [flower shops])*
- *searching for words with the same stem like "running" when you've typed [run]*
- *making some of your terms optional, like "circa" in [the scarecrow circa 1963]"*

So be warned: when using Verbatim you are rejecting Google's "improvements"!

Verbatim can be found in the options on the left hand side of your results page, which means that you have to run your search before you can implement it. Go to the menu to the left of your results and click on 'More search tools' at the bottom. This will open up a menu that includes the Verbatim option.



It works. When I run a Verbatim search on St Laurence I get only St Laurence and not St Lawrence as well. There is one drawback in that Verbatim is all or nothing. I often want to have an exact match search on just one or two of my terms but am happy to have Google mess around with the remainder. Verbatim works on your whole search strategy but I think that you can include advanced search commands in your strategy. Running searches such as "Heron Island" Caversham UK ~parrot' or "Heron Island" Caversham UK parrot OR pigeon' followed by Verbatim gives me what I would expect. However, more complex searches incorporating filetype: and site: gave me very bizarre results. I need to do more research on this part of the strategy.

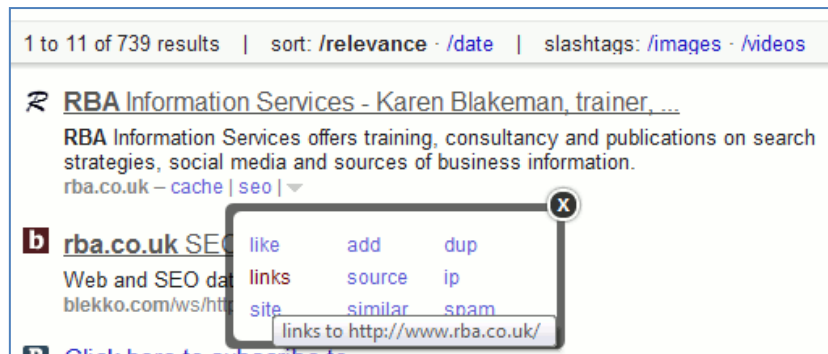
Overall, I welcome Verbatim and thank Google for listening to its users. However, as Phil Bradley has said it is a tool that "Google should not need to have created" (Google Verbatim tool [http://philbradley.typepad.com/phil\\_bradleys\\_weblog/2011/11/google-verbatim-tool.html](http://philbradley.typepad.com/phil_bradleys_weblog/2011/11/google-verbatim-tool.html))

## Yahoo Site Explorer closes – try Blekko instead

Yahoo Site Explorer has closed down and the link and linkdomain commands have gone with it. (<http://www.ysearchblog.com/2011/11/18/site-explorer-reminder/>). Webmasters are being told to use Bing Webmaster Tools. This enables you to analyse links to your own domains but is no use if you want to find who links to other web sites as part of research. Bing, or Live.com as it then was, removed its link and linkdomain commands in November/December 2007 and Yahoo was left as the only reliable alternative. The link command enabled you to find who linked to a specific page on the web and linkdomain found links to anywhere on a specified web site. Both were useful ways of finding other sites containing similar content and discovering what others were saying about a page. Google's link command is useless as it picks up a minuscule number of results, which now leaves Blekko (<http://blekko.com/>) as the only realistic alternative.

Blekko enables you to track down linked pages in two ways but both lead to the same results. The first is to use their slashtags '/links' and '/domainlinks' with a URL or domain name. For example <http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/registers.htm> /links will find pages that link to my official company registers page whereas <http://www.rba.co.uk/> /domainlinks finds all inbound links to any page on my site rba.co.uk.

The second route is via your search results. Below each entry is a downwards pointing arrow. Click on this and select 'links' from the pop-up box.



You will then see a list of sites that link to that page.

To view inbound links to the whole of the web site click on the seo option below the result and you will see some statistics together with the total number of inbound links.

Click on the inbound links number and Blekko presents you with a list of domains containing links to yours and how many.

To see exactly where the links are located and where they go on your site just click on the number in the links column.

Data includes combined results for [www.rba.co.uk](http://www.rba.co.uk) and [rba.co.uk](http://rba.co.uk)

Links from [www.hw.ac.uk](http://www.hw.ac.uk) to [www.rba.co.uk](http://www.rba.co.uk):

#	from & anchor	rank	date	nf	To
1	Issue 159   Internet Resources Newsletter Tales from the Terminal Room	4.0			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/">http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/...</a>
2	Issue 176 October 2009   Internet Resources Newsletter	3.2			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpr...">http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpr...</a>
3	Issue 174 August 2009   Internet Resources Newsletter Karen Blakeman's Blog	3.2			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpr...">http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpr...</a>
4	Issue 170   Internet Resources Newsletter Tales from the Terminal Room	3.1			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/">http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/...</a>
5	Internet resources Newsletter - Issue 142 July 2006 Tales from the Terminal Room	3.1			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/">http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/...</a>
6	Issue 148   Internet Resources Newsletter Tales from the Terminal Room	3.1			<a href="http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/">http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/...</a>

I have only looked in detail at a couple of sites but Blekko seems to do a good job and is certainly far superior to Google. The Blekko data on my own site seems to correspond with that available from Bing Webmaster Tools but of course I cannot compare other sites in the same way. My initial thoughts are that for link searching Blekko is definitely worth adding to your research toolkit.

## **Bing becomes more like Google and personalises**

So you thought you could escape filtering and personalisation of search results by fleeing Google and running into the arms of Bing? Afraid not. Bing has announced that it is rolling out a new personalisation feature called adaptive search. Details are on Bing's blog [Adapting Search to You \(http://www.bing.com/community/site\\_blogs/b/search/archive/2011/09/14/adapting-search-to-you.aspx\)](http://www.bing.com/community/site_blogs/b/search/archive/2011/09/14/adapting-search-to-you.aspx). According to Bing the "more you search, the more Bing can learn".

The feature is being rolled out first in the US and is cookie based. The cookie and personalisation lasts for 28 days if you are not signed in to Bing and 18 months if you are. You can clear and turn off your search history at any time.

Bing seems to be trying to be more and more like Google all the time. I tried one of my test searches on Hewish mild and Bing did a Google on me by unilaterally deciding to include results for Jewish mild in my results. Placing a plus sign before Hewish did force an exact match but the related searches it offered me all involved Jewish - Jewish Chronicle, Jewish jokes, Jewish festivals etc. Yahoo does exactly the same, which is not surprising since it uses the Bing database and search algorithms.

## **DuckDuckGo – silly name but a neat little search tool**

Fed up with Google ignoring your search terms and giving you something completely different? Confused by irrelevant tweets and postings in your results? At the recent Internet Librarian International conference in London one of my fellow participants told me that he would not mind Google collecting his search and personal information if it gave him better results but he said that it seems to make them worse. Judging by the comments from some of the other conference goers Google's attempts at personalisation and semantic search are not always delivering what the searcher needs. There are several steps you can take to try and depersonalise your results but even then Google can still mess up the search. Perhaps it's time to seek out a different search tool.

Yahoo is now using Bing's database and search results for web and image search so you might just as well go straight to Microsoft's Bing (<http://www.bing.com/>). The trouble is that Bing is starting to behave like Google by messing with your search terms (Bing becomes more like Google and personalises <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2011/10/07/bing-becomes-more-like-google-and-personalises/>). So what are the other serious alternatives? DuckDuckGo (<http://duckduckgo.com/>), also known as DDG, may have a silly name – it certainly put me off from using it for some time – but once you get over that it does have a lot going for it.

It has been around for a while and when it was launched one of its main selling points was that it does not track or share your search and web browsing habits, or try to personalise your results (see <https://duckduckgo.com/privacy.html> for more information). That's all very well but how good are the results?

The home page is minimalist as are most search engine's these days. As soon as you start typing you'll notice that there are no suggestions appearing in a drop-down menu below the search box. Some may regard that as a good thing but I do occasionally find them helpful if I am researching an unfamiliar area. In compensation DDG offers "search ideas" on the results page that make up for the absence of suggestions and related search options. The results page is clean and uncluttered with search ideas on the right hand side of the screen. You add one of the "ideas" or terms to your search simply by clicking on it, but you cannot add more than one and the search

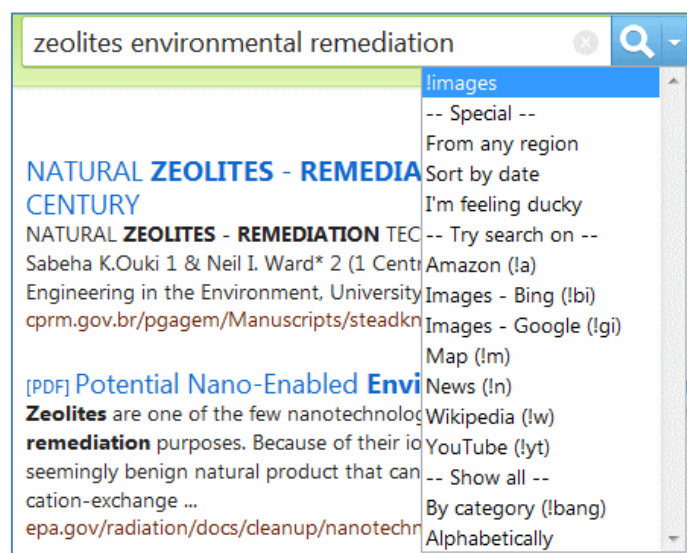
ideas disappear from subsequent results pages. The only way I can see of adding more than one is to type them into the search box yourself.



When you hover over an entry a “more results” link appears that finds more articles from that site and if you look at the results URL you will see that the site: command is used. There is no link to an advanced search screen but there are an incredible number of what DDG calls “Goodies”. The ones that I have found to be most useful are:

- site: followed by a domain name – searches for your terms within the specified site
- inbody: followed by your search term – looks for your term in the main part of the page
- intitle: followed by your search term – looks for your term in the title of the page
- filetype: followed by a file extension – looks for specified file formats containing your terms
- sort:date to sort by date (uses results from Blekko)
- region: followed by the standard two letter country code e.g. regions:fr to boost pages from France

Then there are the DDG !bang commands (<https://duckduckgo.com/bang.html>). These automatically take you to other search engines, for example your search terms followed by !images runs an image search on Google and !videos will run a video search on Bing. Details on general syntax, keyboard short cuts and ‘tech goodies’ are at <http://duckduckgo.com/goodies.html> and <http://duckduckgo.com/tech.html>. It all looks somewhat daunting but it is worth working your way through them and drawing up your own list of what you think you might use on a regular basis. If you still find it all a bit too much to take in then use the options under the arrow next to the search box at the top of the results page. This brings up a menu of some of the more popular types of searches.



For some searches DDG gives you a red box at the top of the results page containing “zero-click” information extracted from pages and DDG’s Topic Lists, for example a possible answer to your question or the result of a conversion/calculation. For a search on Mapledurham watermill it gave me a description and link to Wikipedia along with links to DDG Topics Lists for Grade II\* listed buildings in Oxfordshire and museums in Oxfordshire.



My request to convert euros into pounds came up with a calculation generated by Wolfram Alpha.



Would I use DuckDuckGo as my default search tool? Difficult to say at this stage. I do miss Google’s time search option but DDG’s sort:date goes some way to offset that, and I regret to say that there are times when I miss Google’s localisation and personalisation. Looking for pubs or restaurants in Reading and Caversham is so much harder in DuckDuckGo. However, I am getting a feel for the type of searches that work well on DDG and for general web searching it is a good alternative to Google and Bing. It does not play around with your search terms, supports advanced search commands and most important of all it delivers relevant results, some of which are not always in Bing or Google.



## Online Information pre-conference workshop: Searching without Google

The slides from my Online Information pre-conference workshop “Searching without Google” held on 28th November 2011, are now available at the following URLs:

<http://www.rba.co.uk/as/> – please note that this is a temporary location for the presentation and it will be removed after 2-3 months. Archive copies will remain on authorSTREAM

authorSTREAM - <http://www.authorstream.com/Presentation/karenblakeman-1261711-searching-without-google-blakeman-online11/>

There is also an addendum to the presentation that summarises some of the questions and answers covered throughout the day together with “top tips” and sites that the participants themselves suggested. This is also available at <http://www.rba.co.uk/as/> and on authorSTREAM at <http://www.authorstream.com/Presentation/karenblakeman-1274260-notgoogleaddendum/>

The text of the addendum is reproduced below.

### Tools for creating your own search engine

Several people said they will investigate setting up a custom search engine for their preferred sources and frequently used web sites. Google’s custom search engine is at <http://www.google.com/cse/> and Blekko.com lets you set up ‘slashtags’ to create lists of sites for searching. One person said that they are going to try both and compare ease of use and results.

### What can one do when the link to the Google’s advanced search screen disappears altogether?

The link to Google’s advanced search screen has been moved to the drop down menu underneath the cogwheel in the upper right hand corner of your screen, but several reported that it had even vanished from there for a couple of days last week. Next time you use the screen bookmark its URL so that you can go directly to it (of course Google can always change that!). Also learn the advanced search commands e.g. filetype: site: etc. so that you can type them into the standard search box.

There is a list of commands at <http://www.rba.co.uk/search/SelectedGoogleCommands.shtml> (also a PDF version)

(The GoogleGuide list of commands at [http://www.googleguide.com/advanced\\_operators\\_reference.html](http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html) was last updated in 2008 and contains commands no longer in use)

### Tools for monitoring social media and alerting you when a subject is mentioned

Although Google and Bing both include social media in their search results it is often better to use a tool designed specifically for the job. All three of the following offer RSS alerts for searches.

Topsy.com – searches tweets, videos and photos on Twitter, and now Google+  
SocialMention.com (can be slow at times) – blogs, Twitter, bookmarks, video, audio  
Icerocket.com - blogs, twitter, Facebook, images

### Are there still some directories alive and updated e.g. DMOZ? Or is the war of directories vs search engines over?

The Yahoo directory is still online although it is not easy to find and it has not been updated for several years. Similarly, some sections of DMOZ appear not to have been updated for at least a year and the entries under some headings look like advertising. The day of the mega-directory

may be over but specialist and subject specific listings are still being developed. They do, though, require considerable time and effort to maintain and inevitably some are forced to close because of a lack of funding, for example Intute.

### **Are there good tools for events search by subject, region, date?**

The events databases that some of us accessed via services such as DataStar have long gone so it is not possible for example to search for events on nanotechnology taking place next year between June and September in Europe. Possible alternative search strategies include:

- identifying major events venues and their calendars
- locating relevant trade and industry newsletters, portals, magazines that may list events in their sectors
- relevant trade and professional bodies and associations

### **Are there tools that search the live web rather than using indexes of cached pages?**

Biznar.com, Mednar.com and some social media search tools search the “live” web but they are limited to searching a small number of sites and are slower than Google and Bing in returning results. There are no free public search tools that search the entire web live – it would take far too long – and by the time the search engine would have finished the information would be out of date!

### **Searching for scientific publications that are not published in major English language journals**

Google and Google Scholar are still a good starting point for this type of search, but it was suggested by several of the workshop participants that Open Access journals could also be investigated as well as national digitised collections and subject specific listing and portals.

### **Searching news in other languages (alternatives to Google News)**

Country versions of Google News give priority to local content but you can identify news sources in individual countries at the Newspaper & News Media Guide <http://www.abyznewslinks.com/>. You cannot search the publications from this site but it will tell you what is available and the language of publication.

### **What will be the trend of the next 5 years? More competition? More takeovers of the smaller search engines? More specialist tools?**

All of that! Many smaller specialist search tools continually emerge and many of them quickly disappear or are bought up by the competition. It is impossible to predict exactly what will happen, or even if Google will remain the dominant search tool on the web. If Google's popularity starts to wane it probably will not be because a “Google-killer” arrives on the scene but because Google goes too far in trying to take control and automatically “improve” results for users. Many of us feel that it is already going in that direction.

### **Top tips and tools to try back at work**

1. Custom Search Engines – use Google CSE (<http://www.google.com/cse/>) or set up a ‘slashtag’ on <http://blekko.com/> so that you can quickly and easily search those sites you regularly use. Note: they will not include password protected sites or sites where you need to conduct a database search
2. <http://www.biznar.com/> – real time federated search of selected key business resources
3. <http://www.chemspider.com/> – brings together chemical information from a wide range of resources. Maintained by the Royal Society of Chemistry
4. Investigate image search sites other than Google. (Multicolr <http://labs.ideeinc.com/multicolr/> was specifically mentioned)

5. <http://www.paper.li/> – gather together tweets and/or Google+ posts containing links based on keywords or from a user and their twitterstream. Results are presented in an easy to read newspaper style.
6. <http://www.zanran.com/> – searches for data and statistics contained in graphs, charts and tables
7. <http://duckduckgo.com/> – alternative search engine that does not customise or personalise your web results
8. <http://integrals.wolfram.com/> – Wolfram Mathematica online integrator. Ideal for maths homework.
9. <http://www.coremine.com/> – Norwegian initiative providing an interesting visual interface to the biomedical literature
10. Central Index of Digitized Imprints (zvdd) <http://www.zvdd.de/> Access to and search options for German digitized works from the 15th Century to the present. Collections are listed at <http://www.zvdd.de/dms/browsen/>. See also <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/> “to explore the digital resources of Europe’s museums, libraries, archives and audio-visual collections”

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## Free UK company information: Company Director Check

Company Director Check (<http://company-director-check.co.uk/>) is a sister database to Company Check (<http://companycheck.co.uk/>), which I reviewed earlier this year (<http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2011/01/10/free-uk-company-information/>). It provides free access to information on current and past directors of UK companies that until now has only been available for a fee. Director searches can unearth links between apparently unrelated companies and help you identify “families” or groups of companies. It can also bring to light interesting patterns of behaviour. For example, I carried out a search on a director whose business activities had aroused my suspicions. I knew he had run companies in the past that had been dissolved and his most recent venture had gone into liquidation. Looking at the list of companies of which he had been a director it became clear that 6-8 weeks before a company was dissolved or went under he would set up a completely new company. This had happened so often that it was not just me who had begun to smell a rather large rodent. I understand from the authorities that he is “currently under investigation”

If you are viewing a company in Company Check click on the director’s name and you are taken straight to their record in Director Check. Alternatively just run a search on the person’s name in Director Check. A list of possible matches will be presented to you, which you can refine by entering a postcode. Alternatively just work through the list until you are certain that you have found the correct person. Do not be surprised if you find a director has multiple IDs. There is nothing “dodgy” about this, it just reflects the way the system has evolved over the years. Companies House have carried out a massive exercise to try and fix this but there are still some multiple IDs in the database.

The information that is provided includes full name, short name, month and year of birth, address and past and present directorships.

The status of each directorship – active, dissolved, resigned – is displayed followed by a summary of each of the companies. More detailed information on the individual companies can be found on the Company Check web site.

Now that so much directorship information is freely available it will be interesting to see if more directors make use of the option to provide a service rather than their home address for the public record.

Definitely one to add to your business research toolkit.

## Contact Information

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