



Tales from the Terminal Room April 2011, Issue No. 96

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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/>

Tales from the Terminal Room can be delivered via email as plain text or as a PDF with active links. You can join the distribution list by going to <http://www.rba.co.uk/tftr/index.shtml> and filling in the form. You will be sent an email asking you to confirm that you want to be added to the list. TFTTR is also available as an RSS feed. The URL for the feed is <http://www.rba.co.uk/rss/tftr.xml>

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Search tools

Google lets you create your own naughty list

You may have picked up the news that both Google and Bing have admitted to having whitelists of 'nice' sites that manually override their search and ranking algorithms (Google, Bing Have White Lists Of Sites Not To Be Impacted By Algo Changes <http://blog.searchenginewatch.com/110310-175043> and Google contradicts own counsel in face of antitrust probe http://www.theregister.co.uk/2011/03/11/google_admits_search_algorithm_whitelists/).

No big surprises there, as many of us have suspected that this was the case for some time, but Google now also lets you set up your own naughty list and block selected sites from your search results. We've already been able to set up our own nice lists for about a year – Google SearchWiki replaced with starred results <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2010/03/12/google-searchwiki-replaced-with-starred-results/> - but Google has decided to quietly withdraw that feature (<http://www.google.com/support/forum/p/Web+Search/thread?tid=6c1a2d5cba2b4802&hl=en>).

You first need to sign in to your Google account and then run your search as normal. When I first saw the block option, for each entry in the results list there was a 'Block' option for the site. This now seems to have changed and you first have to click on a search result and then navigate back to the search results page to see 'Block'. Some people are still not seeing it, though, so it seems that it is another feature that Google is rolling out gradually to users.



Click on the block option and you will no longer see pages from that site in future searches. If you carry out a search that would normally contain pages from a blocked site you will see a message saying how many results were blocked. You can manage your naughty list and unblock sites by going to your Search Settings or clicking on the "Manage blocked sites" link that appears when you block a domain. Google said in its initial announcement that it was not using blocked domains as a signal in search ranking but that has now changed and it is now incorporated in the algorithm.

Yet another way for Google to thoroughly mess up our searches.

Anything but Google

The presentation I gave to CILIP in Hants and Wight – Anything but Google - is now available at:

RBA Advanced Search Workshops/Seminars <http://www.rba.co.uk/as/> (PowerPoint)

or

authorSTREAM <http://www.authorstream.com/Presentation/karenblakeman-935509-anything-but-google/>

I omitted to include the URLs of some of the specialist tools mentioned in the presentation. You could Bing or Yahoo the names of the services (we're not going to Google them are we?) but to save time I've listed them below.

ChemSpider – Database of Chemical Structures and Property Predictions

<http://www.chemspider.com/>

Owned by the Royal Society of Chemistry Chemspider links together compound information across the web and provides free text and structure search of millions of chemical structures. Search by systematic name, synonym, trade name, registry number, SMILES or InChI.

Biznar <http://biznar.com/>

Live federated search from Deep Web Technologies and covering 60 business collections. As well as presenting you with a standard list of results, the pages are organised into folders on the left hand side of the screen covering topics, authors, publications, publishers and dates (years).

TechXtra <http://www.techxtra.ac.uk/>

This is an initiative of Heriot Watt University providing a free service for finding articles, books, industry news, job announcements, technical reports, technical data, full text eprints, thesis and dissertations in engineering, mathematics and computing.

Scirus <http://www.scirus.com/>

Owned by Elsevier, Scirus covers scientific information. (See the About Us <http://scirus.com/srsapp/aboutus/> section for the full details). Some of the information is from free web resources but it also includes many priced articles.

PhilPapers: Online Research in Philosophy <http://philpapers.org/>

Directory of online philosophical articles and books by academic philosophers. Its purpose is "to facilitate the exchange and development of philosophical research through the Internet. Our service gathers and organizes philosophical research on the Internet, and provides tools for philosophers to access, organize, and discuss this research."

Microsoft Academic Search <http://academic.research.microsoft.com/>

Currently concentrates on chemistry, computer science, engineering, mathematics and physics. It has advanced search options that actually work (unlike Google Scholar!), lists citations and has a wonderful Visual Explorer.

Not mentioned in the slides but discussed briefly during the session was **HealthMash** <http://healthmash.com/>. A semantic metasearch health search engine with "clustering and advanced linguistic capabilities." I'd be interested in people's experiences and views of this one.

All about Google – Top Tips

As well as the "Anything BUT Google" sessions, I have also been running "All About Google" workshops. The participants are asked to come up with a group Top 10 Tips and a combined list from the last three events is listed below. Many tips were common to all three so the final list has 16 tips. I also spotted people experimenting with the Google Art Project (<http://www.googleartproject.com/>), Fusion Tables (<http://www.google.com/fusiontables/>), Google Custom Search Engines (<http://www.google.com/cse>), Google Internet Statistics (<http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/landing/internetstats/>), and one person found Google Labs Transliteration (<http://www.google.com/transliterate/>) very useful.

1. Use the **filetype:** command or the file format option on the Advanced Search screen to limit your research to PowerPoint for presentations, spreadsheets for data and statistics or PDF for research papers and industry/government reports. Note that filetype:ppt, for example, will **not** pick up the newer .pptx so you will need to incorporate both into your strategy, for example filetype:ppt OR filetype:pptx

2. Use the **plus sign** (+) before a term or phrase to try and force an exact match – be aware, though, that Google sometimes still does what it wants with your terms – or use the **minus sign** immediately before a term to exclude pages that contain it. The minus sign can also be used with commands to exclude, for example, a specific site (-site:nameofsite.com) or a file format (-filetype:ppt) from your results.
3. Include the **site:** command in your strategy or use the domain/site box on the advanced search screen to focus your search on particular types of site, for example site:nhs.uk
4. Try the **two proximity commands**. An asterisk (*) between two words will look for your words in the order specified and separated by one or more terms, for example solar * panels. The AROUND(n) command, which is undocumented, looks for your terms in either order separated by the number of words (n) specified, for example solar AROUND(2) panels. Note that AROUND did not work for everyone on the workshop.
5. **Usage rights**. Use the Advanced Search screens for the web and image search to limit your search to Creative Commons material. The options are in the pull down menu under Usage Rights.
6. Use **Google Realtime** (<http://www.google.com/realtime>) for searching Twitter. Other social networks are supposedly included but the results are usually dominated by Twitter. Archives go back to February 2010 and there is a useful timeline that enables you to visualise activity over time and look at specific dates.
7. Use the **tilde** (~) before a term to search for synonyms. For example ~energy will search for energy, power, oil, gas, electricity or electric.
8. **Wonder wheel**. This can be found in the side bar to the left of your web search results page. Google pulls out terms and phrases from the top results and represents them as spokes on a wheel. Click on one of them and your search is revised and another wheel created. You can view the list of results to the right of the wheel. Note: the Wonder wheel is not available if you have Instant Search switched on.
9. **Change the order in which you enter your search terms**. This will change the order in which your results are presented and in some cases can change the search completely.
10. **Repeat important terms** to change the order in which results are presented. Like changing the order of your search terms, this can sometimes significantly alter the results.
11. **Google Reader** (<http://www.google.com/reader>). As well as using to aggregate RSS feeds that you have entered individually the Add Subscription box also allows you to search for new feeds using keywords.
12. **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.com/>). Although there are serious limitations to Google Scholar and the advanced search options are unreliable it can be very useful in tracking down the details of a half remembered reference. One member of the workshop explained that students often fail to accurately note down articles mentioned in lectures. The specialist databases do not always retrieve the references in these cases whereas Google Scholar often does.
13. **Google Scholar** for citations. Although far from comprehensive and sometimes inaccurate not everyone can afford the more reliable but expensive databases. (Note: although it does not cover all subjects it is worth looking at Microsoft Academic Search at <http://academic.research.microsoft.com/> as an alternative).
14. **Quality**. Just because you found something through a Google search does not mean it is true or a trusted source, or that it is the most relevant document. Young students in particular often need to be reminded of this.

15. **Open up the side bars** to the left of your results. The options change depending on the type of search (general web search, images, news, books, recipes) and it is the key to narrowing down your search, especially by date.
16. **Stand your ground!** Don't let Google take over. Clear your web history, cache and cookies. If you are responsible for access to the internet in your information centre or library, set up the browsers so that web histories and caches are cleared everytime a user logs out. (You may need to enlist help from IT to set this up)

Business Information

Business Ukraine

Many thanks to Britta Nordström for alerting me to this site. Business Ukraine (<http://biznes-ukraina.ua/>) has a useful collection of directories of companies, products and services in Ukraine as well as links to postal codes and transport timetables. There is also a list of Directories of the world on-line (<http://biznes-ukraina.ua/extra.phtml?ttt=1&l=en>) that is mostly yellow pages for countries around the world. The market reviews look interesting but the articles are subscription only.

There are Russian, Ukrainian and English language options for many of the sections but you may have to resort to Google's translation service for some areas of the site.



Company Searches in the British Virgin Islands

If you have ever tried to explain to a client why they will not find detailed financial accounts for companies registered in the British Virgin Islands, just thrust a copy of Guiding You Through... Company Searches In The British Virgin Islands – Withers LLP (<http://www.mondaq.com/article.asp?articleid=127482>) into their mitts! It very neatly summarises the registration, filing and disclosure requirements. The key sentence for researchers is:

“A company is not required to file its register of directors, register of members, register of charges or an annual return with the BVI Registrar of Corporate Affairs.”

So there you have it. Many thanks to Hazel Edmunds of ADSET (<http://www.adsetinformationweblog.blogspot.com/>) for the link.

Twitter Notes

The following are some of my recent tweets and retweets. They are selected because they contain links to resources or announcements that may be of general interest. I have unshortened the shortened URLs.

April 6th

RT @WoodsieGirl: Shared: Online Research Exposes Legal Researchers & Clients to Ethical Issues! <http://outofthejungle.blogspot.com/2011/04/online-research-exposes-legal.html>

April 7th

RT @ScottishBIS: Android overtakes Apple to be UK's leading smartphone platform <http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk/bulletin/dailynews/article/1063727>

April 8th

If you're uploading any PPTs to Slideshare <http://www.slideshare.net/typofi/fonts-in-slideshare> - essential info on fonts

"Electric Cars Should be Called Coal Cars": The Heretic. - Scitizen : <http://scitizen.com/future-energies/-electric-cars-should-be-called-coal-cars-the-heretic- a-14-3646.html>

April 11th

Analysis of current & future world oil production: "The Oil Drum | Tech Talk - the top 30 oil producers" <http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/7772>

Google Has Stopped Street View Photography In Germany <http://searchengineland.com/google-has-stopped-street-view-photography-germany-72368>

RT @theEword: Google now enjoys over 90% of UK searches <http://theeword.co.uk/seo-manchester/google-dominant-in-uk-search-engine-market.html>

"Google is responsible for 'autofill' search terms, says Italian court" - Pinsent Masons LLP <http://www.out-law.com/default.aspx?page=11860>

April 12th

Dear Google, I asked you to search for Hewish Mild NOT Jewish mild! [Google again deciding that it knows best and changing your search without asking]

Lawyer's email not creative enough to be protected by copyright Pinsent Masons LLP Outlaw.com <http://www.out-law.com/default.aspx?page=11862>

RT @notess: SearchEngineShowdown New Sidebar Options: Reading Level and Dictionary http://www.searchengineshowdown.com/blog/2011/04/new_sidebar_options_reading_le.shtml

RT @universitysham Fusion Power - No Change and No Chance! <http://ergobalance.blogspot.com/2011/04/fusion-powering-future.html> Posting based on a lecture last night at Cafe Scientifique

April 15th

"UK.gov signals weary welcome to Brussels' web cookies law" The Register http://www.theregister.co.uk/2011/04/15/cookies_uk_government_implementation_of_eu_regulation/

April 16th

"Advertising trade body publishes behavioural tracking guidelines" from OUT-LAW.com
<http://www.out-law.com/default.aspx?page=11871>

April 17th

RT @emma_cossey: New blog post: Image crediting: What images can I use in a blog post?
<http://randombloggingsofawannabe.blogspot.com/2011/04/image-crediting-what-images-can-i-use.html>

April 19th

RT @stephendale: Top 100 tools for learning and sharing
<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/2010binb.html>

April 20th

From TechCrunch "Libellous URLs Are Hilarious. Except That One Time I Nearly Went To Jail"
<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/2010binb.html>

RT @dannysullivan: The Yahoo Search Revenue Disaster <http://searchengineland.com/the-yahoo-search-revenue-disaster-73868> - i churned more numbers. they weren't pretty.

April 21st

I have a new toy! Love it. RT @arthurweiss: Zanran - a new data search engine
<http://searchengineland.com/the-yahoo-search-revenue-disaster-73868>

"New York Times: More Than 100,000 Digital Subs In First Weeks of Paywall" paidContent
<http://paidcontent.org/article/419-new-york-times-more-than-100k-digital-subs-in-first-weeks-of-paywall/>

Those who attended my workshop earlier this week may find this interesting "Google News Gets A Bit More Personal" <http://searchengineland.com/google-news-gets-a-bit-more-personal-74297>

April 24th

"The Guardian Cans Its 'Unsustainable' Local Websites" paidContent
<http://paidcontent.org/article/419-the-guardian-cans-its-unsustainable-local-experiment/>

Meetings and Seminars

Workshop: Business Information: Key Web Resources

Date: Wednesday 18th May, 2011

Venue: London

Organiser: TFPL

Presenter: Karen Blakeman

Outline. To pay or not to pay for business information is a question that faces many users of the Net. This one day course compares what is available for free with pay-as-you-go and subscription services and will examine quality of content, coverage, functionality and price. There will be practical sessions throughout the day and delegates will receive comprehensive notes.

URL: <http://www.tfpl.com/training/courses/coursedescribe.cfm?trid=TR945&pageid=-9&cs1=Business%20information&cs2=a>

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