Econ 3F03
Methods Of Inquiry In Economics

Finding Scholarly Websites for Economics

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Objectives

- Use **subject directories** to search smarter
- Learn effective **syntax** and **search strategies**
- **Think critically** about web sources
- **Cite** web sources correctly

Questions?
any time during the session!
Searching Smarter

Challenge:
Find a website that deals with the issues surrounding foreign economic aid

(3 minutes)
Library
Web Search Tools Page

• go to the Library home page
  – [http://library.mcmaster.ca](http://library.mcmaster.ca)
• click on Help > How to Find
• under Library Tools, click on Web Search Tools
• add to Favorites
  – on the menu bar click Favorites, Add to Favorites, OK
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Subject Directories

Why use a subject directory?

✓ arranged by topic
✓ compiled by people!
✓ browse OR search
✓ high relevance
BUBL Information Service

Browse Example: click on

- Social Sciences
- Economics
- Production and economic development
- Economic development
- Economic development: general resources

Search Example:

- at top of BUBL screen, click Search
- in Combined Search box, type Economic development
Subject Directories
Strengths/Weaknesses

• finding **a few high quality web sites** on a topic
• relatively **broad topical searches**
  – for example, when browsing or searching, look for: **biodiversity** rather than: **effects of habitat fragmentation on biodiversity**
• will not search **every word** on a page, or **every page** at a site
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Search Engines

e.g. Google

• What Are They?
  – spider/crawler/robot
    • collects pages
  – database of collected pages
  – search software
  – relevance-ranking engine
    • brings back results with “most relevant” at the top
Challenge!

Find a website that has information on:

Star Wars
(the anti-ballistic missile defense system)

(3 minutes)
Search Engine Tips & Tricks

Phrase searching

- double quotes
- e.g. “star wars”
Search Engine Tips & Tricks

• to force inclusion or exclusion of a word or phrase, use: + -
  ▪ e.g. “star wars” +defense -movie
• no spaces between the word and the + or –
• must have spaces between one word and the next
Search Engine Tips & Tricks

The **Jeopardy** technique:

- phrase your question like the answer you want, e.g.
- “**a digital orthophoto is**”
  ...rather than just:
- “**digital orthophoto**”
Search Engine Tips & Tricks

- Check out the Advanced Search screen, e.g.
  - Deindustrialization
  - Date: past year
  - Domain: .edu or .gov or .org
Google Scholar...

- a scholarly subset of the Google database
- good for “quick & dirty” searches on scholarly material
- try a “library search”
- set your preferences for off-campus access to our full-text holdings
- don’t buy articles from Google Scholar links!
...vs licensed library databases

• better in-depth searching in the library’s licensed databases
Search Engines: Strengths

- **specific or unique** search terms, buzzwords or new concepts
  - e.g. +“game theory” +“strategic equilibrium”

- **complete phrases, quotes**
  - e.g. the first line from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*: “the annual labour of every nation is the fund” ...gets that actual document
Some Search Engines: Can be a poor choice for...

- results with a high percentage of high-quality web sites
Metasearch Engines

  e.g. Vivisimo

• “farms out” your search to many search sites
• search engines, subject directories and others
• sample search: deindustrialization
Metasearch Engines
Strengths

• **quick, easy** multi-site search
• top 10-50 hits from each search source
• sample “what’s out there” quickly
• specific, **unusual** or **unique** search terms
Metasearch Engines: Weaknesses

• not good for sophisticated or complex searches
• not comprehensive
• only the top 10-50 hits from each search engine
• usually no advanced search features
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Critical Thinking

✓ Accuracy
✓ Authority
✓ Objectivity
✓ Currency
✓ Coverage

✓ see original evaluation checklists at Evaluating Web Resources (Widener)
Critical Thinking

✓ Author; credentials?
✓ Last updated?
✓ URL
URL: Top-Level Domains

- **.edu**
  - post-secondary educational establishments
- **.gov**
  - U.S. governments and their agencies
- **.org**
  - organizations
- **.com**
  - commercial
Critical Thinking

✓ Links
✓ Sources documented?
✓ Listed in subject directory?
✓ Why is it on the Web?
Critical Thinking

Challenge:
Evaluate these 2 web sites & say which is more authoritative:

http://www.dhmo.org
http://www.greenfacts.org

(3 minutes)
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Citing Web Documents
Minimum Requirements

- document **title** or description
- **date**
  - date of **publication** or last update
  - date of **retrieval**
- **address** (URL)
- where possible:
  - **author**, and author’s **institutional affiliation**
Example of a Web Citation

Good Web Sites for Economics

- high quality sites chosen by McMaster faculty & librarians
  - go to Library Home Page...
  - Subject Guides tab
  - Choose: Economics from the dropdown list
  - Websites tab
Objectives Recap

• Use **subject directories** to search smarter
  • choose appropriately; **broad topics**

• **learn effective syntax and search strategies**
  • "phrase" +word -word
  • Google **Advanced Search**
  • **Jeopardy** technique

• **Think critically** about web sources
  • 5 criteria
Questions?

...and don’t forget –
Need Help? Just Ask!

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Good Luck with your Assignments!