All Aboard the Internet

Google-eyed over Google!

By Don E. Descy

My most distinguished colleagues, it is my pleasure to present to you another of our featured columns: “All Aboard the Internet.” I have labored long and hard on this column, spending untold hours researching the wonders of Google for your reading pleasure.


Mis colegas más distinguidos. Es mi placer presentarle otro de nuestras columnas ofrecidas: “todas a bordo del Internet.” He trabajado largo y duro en esta columna, pasando horas del untold investigando las maravillas de Google para su placer de lectura.


I miei colleghi più distinti. È il mio piacere presentarvi un altro delle nostre colonne descritte: “tutte a bordo del Internet.” Ho lavorato lungo e duro su questa colonna, passare le ore del untold ricercante i wonders di Google per il vostro piacere della lettura.

Meus mais distintos colegas. É meu prazer apresentar-se lhe outro de nossas colunas caracterizadas: “tudo a bordo do Internet.” Eu trabalhei longo e duro nesta coluna, gastando horas do untold pesquisando as maravilhas de Google para seu prazer da leitura.

Betcha didn’t know that I could speak five languages! Well … I can’t … but we will talk about this later.

I can’t think of one person reading this column who has not done a web search using Google. It is the most widely used search tool in the world today. Just ask your students which tool they use. I am sure that 80 or 90 per cent will say “Google.” Did you know that Google is capable of doing many different types of searches and a whole variety of other neat things as well? Hop on board and we will take a little look.

Searching with Google

Web searching — I guess that we just place a key word or two in the search box and see what we get. That really is not the best or most efficient way to do it. First of all, Google is not case sensitive. “Cape Cod”, “cape cod” and “CAPE COD” will all give you the same results.

Second, Google uses Boolean logic for its searches. When you type in two search terms, the default link between the two terms is AND. If you want to place the two words together as one search term, just place quotation marks around it. “Cape Cod” searches for Cape Cod, not all of the “cape” and all of the “cod” pages. It is also possible to search using the “OR” link. “Cape Cod” (water OR beach) searches for “Cape Cod” AND “water” in addition to “Cape Cod” AND “beach.” If you want to be cool and impress your friends, substitute the pipe character (|) for OR.

“Cape Cod” (water OR beach) is the same as “Cape Cod” (water | beach). Do you want Cape Cod but nothing about the beach? Just add a minus sign, “Cape Cod” -beach. And … one more thing, all of these AND and OR words that I put in above can be used as “and” and “or.” (Remember, Google is not case sensitive.)

Here are a few more tips: first, word order matters, second, many times you get better results if you repeat the search term or terms several times in the search box — honest … try it!

The “I’m Feeling Lucky®” button displays the first webpage that Google finds for your query. The other search results will not be displayed. Type in AECT and hit the “I’m Feeling Lucky®” button and the AECT.org homepage is displayed. (I landed in one of my fictitious pages when I typed in descy. So it is not perfect. :-(

Searching from the main page

Of course, when you place a term or terms in the search box, Google searches the web for pages as described above. I am sure that you have noticed the other tabs above the search box. I think that they are self-explanatory.

Web: Google searches the web using your search term(s).

Images: Google searches its database (over 400,000 images) of web images to find ones that are indexed by your keyword.

Groups: Google searches Usenet News groups and gets you to the one you want.

Directory: this is Google’s own little web subject directory rather than the search engine.
News: this is a great place to find news articles on just about any subject. Type in a search term(s) and find the latest news from newspapers, wire services, radio and TV from around the world. I just entered “Bush and George Bush” and got many more results than I did with just the “Bush” search term (39 minutes before). It is a great way to follow breaking news stories. You can also look up stories on your car — Pontiac Vibe — a product — iLife — or anything of interest. (If you really want to be creeped out, search for “global warming” “ice age” … yikes …)

But key word searching is just the very beginning

Calculator: Google has a built in calculator. Simply enter the calculation that you would like to perform in the search box and hit the enter key! Google can solve all sorts of math problems ranging from basic arithmetic through more complicated math (logs, square roots, factorials, exponentiation, trig functions [sin, cos, etc.] and more) as well as physical constants and unit of measure conversion. Just type in “square meters in an acre” or “5 plus 2 multiplied by 3” (like this: 5+2*3) and see what you get! Everything you need to know about this feature can be found at <http://www.google.com/intl/en_ALL/help/calculator.html>.

Definitions: Want to know what an English or foreign word means? Try Google first. Use this syntax: “define: [word].” For example, type in “define: fard.” You will see that it is an Arabic word meaning alone. You also receive a complete explanation of its Islamic derivation! OK, so now try “define: bug.” (I just tried it and received 32 different references.)

Limit to file types: Looking for a .pdf version of the ISTE NETS•T standards? Type in the search term and the words “filetype:[extension]” (in our example “filetype:pdf”). This is how our query would look: NETS•T filetype:pdf — simple as that!

Phone searches: Google contains a U.S. street address and phone number lookup feature that you can access through the search box. To find the listing of a U.S. business just type in the business name and the phone number with area code or the ZIP code. I just typed in my brother’s phone number and received his name, address, and a MapQuest link to his house. Have a number on that matchbook you found in your old suit pocket? Type it in the search box and see who turns up!

Phone number: To find a person’s phone number just type in “phonebook: Name State” (phonebook:John Doe CT). Another way to look up a phone number is “phonebook:[area code] phone number” (phonebook:(213) 345-2345).

Area code: Have you ever found a phone number and wanted to know where it is located? Just type the area code in the search box. This will give you a very general map of the area (nothing real specific though).

Other ways to find people: I just typed in the real estate office (Binnacle Real Estate) that handles my Cape Cod house: “binnacle 02652” and received 359 citations. The first few were directly to the office. When I searched for my home there (unfair — the phone is unlisted), the MapQuest map was showing the wrong end of the road — as usual — and instead of a link to my own page for the house (descy.com), the first link was to capelinks.com where my page appears as number ten on a list of “cape cod times | the online guide to cape cod” … creepy.

Site search: Do you want to find a specific word, page or person at a specific Website? Just use this syntax “site:[domain].” I just tried “descy:mnsu.edu” and found a ton of pages with my name on them at Minnesota State University, Mankato. However, “admissions:mnsu.edu” did not prove to be a good search term.

Everything else about a website: If you are interested in seeing a webpage, the version of that webpage that Google has cached, pages similar to a given Website, which pages are linked to the Website and pages that contain the name of the Website in a term search, do it all in one search. The syntax is “info:[domain]” (for example: info:descy.com).

Spell checker: Just type in the word you want to check in the search box. I typed in “advanced” and received “Do you mean: Advanced?” … plus a bunch of Gameboy® listings.

Stock quotes: Are you interested in finding stock or mutual fund...
information? Just type in an AMEX, NYSE, NASDAQ or mutual fund ticker symbol or the name of a corporation traded on one of the stock indices. If Google recognizes it as a stock or mutual fund, it will display a link that will take you to stock or mutual fund information from a major financial source. Try “GM” for example.

**Street maps:** Google also has links to several map sites. Are you looking for a specific location? Just type in the street address and the zip code or the city and state, and you will get a link to a MapQuest map that will show you (just about) where you are looking for.

**Tracking numbers:** Type in your FedEx, UPS or USPS tracking number to find out where that package is. Now enter your vehicle ID (VIN) number — or your plane’s FAA registration number (the one on the tail of the plane). Tracking even works indirectly with a book’s ISBN (don’t forget to type in a UPC code). On my desk I have something bar coded 031600258003. Just type the number (as in all of the preceding examples). Check it out! If you want to look up a Patent or FCC equipment ID you have to type in “patent” or “fcc” before the number.

**Travel flight–locations:** So Uncle Harry is flying over for a visit and you want to know where he is now? Just enter in the name of the airline and the flight number and you will receive a terrorist’s delight. I just picked Northwest Airlines flight 278 out of a hat (syntax: nwa 278) and as I am typing this I am watching it fly just north of Columbia, MO (the map updates automatically every minute!). The flight departed from San Diego International-Lindbergh Field at 12:46 PST and should arrive in Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County at 19:29 EST. It is an Airbus A319, flying at 507 knots, at an altitude of 37,000 feet. It is 1250 nautical miles from San Diego and 463 nautical miles from Detroit. Interesting … the owner of the plane is Northwest Orient Airlines, Inc. I have not heard that name in years! Oops, it is due north of St Louis now, with only 366 nm to go! I can actually see NWA 258 circling Detroit as it comes in from Phoenix!

**Who is linked to your page?** Ever wonder who is linked to your webpage? It is easy to find out with Google. The syntax is “link:[domain],” “link: aect.org” brings up 186 pages (though some are internal links). My phony Mankato Page “link:city-mankato.us” brought up 133 links.

**Web page … and paragraph translations:** Google has a wonderful translation feature — at least for English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. If you come to a webpage that is in one of those non-English languages, a link will appear that will send you to a translated version of the page. OK, I’ll confess. This is how I managed the 5 languages above. I just went to the Google translate tool at <http://www.google.com/language_tools>. This page allows you to search pages written in any language. You can also enter a URL and have Google translate it into any of the five languages listed above, or enter any text in the six languages and also have it translated! Did you say that you wanted your personal webpage translated into German?

We could go on and on but I don’t want to overstay my welcome. If you want to find out even more, there are plenty of books available on Google at your local bookstore. You can also go to the “All About Google” page at <http://www.google.com/intl/en_ALL/about.html>.

Bis folgendes Mal!
¡Hasta la vez próxima!
Jusqu’à la fois prochaine!
Fino alla volta prossima!
Até a vez seguinte! ;-)

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