Coffee Break Training - Info Search and Web 2.0

You can search but can you find? Part II. Get better results–Google Search Advanced Techniques

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Learning Objective: *The student shall be able to identify and use four advanced Google search techniques.*

This session builds upon the Google Search Basics we learned about in an earlier lesson. We can avoid information overload by using the following search techniques to better refine our results.

Let's do a search for the term "interoperability", combined with either the phrase "first responder" OR the word "firefighter." Remember, the OR operator has to be capitalized. From our previous lesson we know that our query would look like this:

Google searchbox: interoperability "first responder" OR firefighter

This retrieves over 53,400 hits. There may be good items buried somewhere in amongst those results but aren't displayed among the top 10-20. How can we find them?

1. – Minus sign

The minus sign narrows down our results by excluding term(s) from our search.

For example:
Google searchbox: interoperability "first responder" OR firefighter –amazon

This eliminates hits relating to amazon.com books and knocks down our results to 53,000. You can add more terms to exclude to further narrow your results.

2. intitle operator

If we include intitle: in our search query, Google restricts the results to documents containing that word in the title. This helps improve the chances that our hits relate directly to what we're searching for. For example, intitle:fireground command returns documents that have the word "fireground" in their title, and the word "command" appearing anywhere else in the document. Please note that there can be no space between "intitle:" and the following word.

Our query:
Google searchbox: intitle:interoperability "first responder" OR firefighter

Retrieves 900 hits where the word interoperability appears in the title coupled with either or both of the other terms appearing elsewhere in the document.

3. inurl operator

Similar to the site: operator we learned about in the last lesson, we can use the inurl: operator in our queries to refine limit results to words appearing in the url. In this example we'll limit our results to instances where the url contains the .gov, .edu, or .org domains. Note: The | symbol means OR.

Google searchbox: intitle:interoperability "first responder" OR firefighter inurl:.gov|.org|.edu

This leaves us with a 316 hits with a high probability that many of these contain both relevant and authoritative content.

4. filetype operator

There are 13 filetypes searched by Google the most common being .html (Web pages), .pdf (Adobe Portable Document File), and Microsoft Office files such as .doc, .ppt, and .xsl.

We can use the filetype operator to limit our results to any of these types of documents as in this example where we want just PDF files returned. (Please note: don't leave a space after filetype.)

Google searchbox: intitle:interoperability "first responder" OR firefighter inurl:.gov|.org|.edu filetype:pdf

This retrieves for us 155 PDF files that meet our search criteria.

The Google Advanced Search page offers other ways to control your search experience.
http://www.google.com/advanced_search