

findingDulcinea

The Librarian for the Internet Age

The Internet is an efficient and powerful aggregator and distributor of information. Never before has a medium given so many people access to so much. Unfortunately, the potential of the Internet is often lost in its vastness. Internet users are overwhelmed by the mass of content that appears each time a search is performed: thousands of irrelevant links obscure relevant information—often beyond discernment. Staying abreast of the latest information is a daunting and burdensome task.

FindingDulcinea addresses this problem. Utilizing human insight, we turn the Internet's overwhelming wealth of information into an understandable, comprehensive structure. We bring credible, quality content to the fore. No matter what you're searching for, or how much online experience you have, findingDulcinea makes the Internet a faster, more efficient tool for discovery.

“An abundance
of information
yields a poverty
of attention.”

-Herb Simon

Compromising quality for quantity and speed, traditional search engines give you a mile-high stack of search results and leave you to determine what you need. Search engines are, as a 2007 article in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* noted, merely “an information intermediary.”¹ Currently, searching online is like wandering the stacks without first consulting with a librarian. Such a plethora of information available is not helpful. As economist Herb Simon has said, “An abundance of information yields a poverty of attention.”

findingDulcinea betters the online experience through three distinct sections:

- **Web Guides** intuitively explain thousands of topics, supporting thorough research with organized, thoughtful insight into every resource we select.
- **Beyond the Headlines** provides broad and detailed context to news stories, supplying well-researched links to historical, local, academic and other perspectives.
- **Netcetera** celebrates the wit and personality of the Web by featuring content on innovative people, diverse places and bold ideas.

Our research process is human-powered. Each of our writers uses innovative, evolving research methods that take advantage of our varied backgrounds and our one common tie: online savvy. Through meticulous searching and rigorous review, we unveil the best resources on a topic and annotate our finds to better orient your online search.

¹ Pan, B., Hembrooke, H., Joachims, T., Lorigo, L., Gay, G., and Granka, L. (2007). In Google we trust: Users' decisions on rank, position, and relevance. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(3), article 3. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue3/pan.html>. Accessed September 28, 2007.

We transform a mere list of links into a clear narrative of a topic. That topic could be a breaking news story, a guide to purchasing a mortgage, or an illuminating piece on third world countries in turmoil. Whether the goal is to better understand a topic of interest or simply discover the myriad of exceptional sites on the Web, findingDulcinea caters to every Internet user.

Our concern with the status quo is not only *how* much information there is to sift through, but how difficult it can be to assess credibility. According to a PEW Internet Project's study, *Online Health Search 2006*, eight in 10 people seeking health information go online to find it. But about three quarters of those polled, or about 85 million Americans, search for health advice online without paying heed to the quality of the information they find.² Many health seekers are "frustrated or confused" by what they find, and furthermore, a quarter of the participants were "overwhelmed" by the amount of information uncovered.³ Our belief is that, if given the means to better equip their online experience with guidance and insight, more people would be able to discern the quality of what they find.

Web Guides

Web Guides render topics more accessible, whether they be health or one of dozens of other areas of interest, such as fitness, job hunting and travel planning. Internet users who felt intimidated or frustrated by their online experience will be oriented and empowered by findingDulcinea's offerings. And even the savviest users will be relieved of the burden of reviewing, judging and organizing thousands of results. We efficiently deliver everyone detailed and enlightening information that covers the spectrum from entertaining to serious.

The majority of Internet users can't always tell what search results are paid and what results are genuine.⁴

Although many people rely on search engines to find information about serious issues, the majority of users cannot differentiate between paid and natural search results.⁴ To add to the confusion, natural result rankings are based on relevancy algorithms rather than the credibility or usefulness of the Web sites listed, but most users erroneously believe that higher-ranking results are somehow more valid, or even endorsed by the search engine.⁵ Part of the Web Guides' function is to actually deliver the endorsed

² Fox, Susanna (2006). "Summary of Findings." *Online Health Search 2006*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, October 29, 2006, http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/190/report_display.asp. Accessed September 27, 2007. p. iii.

³ Ibid

⁴ Deborah Fallows, PhD (2005). "Internet Users: Internet searchers are confident, satisfied and trusting – but they are also unaware and naïve." *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/146/report_display.asp. Accessed September 27, 2007. Part 5: "Is users' trust in search engines blind?" p. 17.

⁵ Pan, B., Hembrooke, H., Joachims, T., Lorigo, L., Gay, G., and Granka, L. (2007). "In Google we trust: Users' decisions on rank, position, and relevance." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(3), article 3. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue3/pan.html>. Accessed September 27, 2007.

results that users mistakenly believe they are receiving from search engines. And results confusion aside, search engines fail to give comprehensive listings to users because they neglect some of the best parts of the web: paid content and some academic databases, to name two.⁶ It is no wonder that there is growing dissatisfaction with Internet search.⁷

Students are notoriously savvy Web users, but as a 2006 report by the Educational Testing Service found, “students can use technology for socializing or entertainment but still have problems finding information, evaluating it and then putting it to use.”⁸ And students, even with access to more information than ever before, don’t seem to be improving academically, at least according to their parents.⁹ Only half of teachers are provided with access to lists of reliable web resources or portals to pre-screened content.¹⁰ Even if all states had reliable web indexes, there still hasn’t been agreement in the academic community on how to teach students to find those reliable resources for themselves.¹¹

Students “still have problems finding information, evaluating it and then putting it to use.”

—Irvin Katz,
Educational Testing Service

findingDulcinea’s Web Guides aim to solve the problem of missing information—and misinformation. Created by a human, for a human, each Web Guide ranks sites according to both credibility and relevance, includes bits of the “invisible” Web that search engines miss. We’ve eliminated the clutter found in typical search results and provided insight to encourage users to expand the ways they search for information, both online and offline.

After reading a Web Guide, each user will know a lot more about the topic at hand, as well as how to effectively find information about it online. Every search will become a find.

⁶ Deborah Fallows, PhD (2005). “Internet Users: Internet searchers are confident, satisfied and trusting – but they are also unaware and naïve.” *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/146/report_display.asp. Accessed September 27, 2007. Introduction, p. 1.

⁷ Freed, Larry (2007). “American Customer Satisfaction Index: Annual E-Business Report.” *ForeSee Results*. http://www.foreseeresults.com/Thank_ACSIAug2007.html. Accessed September 27, 2007.

⁸ Thacker, Paul D. (2006). “Are College Students Techno Idiots?” *Inside Higher Ed*, <http://www.insidehighered.com>. Accessed September 28, 2007.

⁹ (No Author) (2007). “Digital Future Report.” Annenberg Media. <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/2007-Digital-Future-Report-Press-Release-112906.pdf>. Accessed September 26, 2007.

¹⁰ (No Author) (2007). “Access to Online Resources.” EPE Research Center. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/29/30tcteach.h26.html>. Accessed September 26, 2007.

¹¹ Viadero, Debra (2007). “Collecting Evidence.” Part of the “Technology Counts: A digital Decade ‘07” series of research and findings from the EPE Research Center. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/29/30tcresearch.h26.html>, accessed September 26, 2007.

Beyond the Headlines

Although more information is readily available than ever before, “news and information sites” continually receive a grade of C from users.¹² According to the Pew Center for People and Press, most Americans like a variety of news sources: local TV and network channels, and daily newspapers.¹³ Yet, many of the most popular Web-based news sources rely on the same wire services rather than employing the myriad of resources the Web offers, such as transcripts, reports, audio and video.¹⁴

BTH is more than merely another outlet for wire service headlines and the superficial reporting of breaking news. It strives to find primary materials and insightful analyses to allow readers to acquire something more valuable than information—knowledge. The resources Beyond the Headlines researches are available to everyone on the Internet. But not everyone has six hours available to search for answers to all the questions left unanswered in conventional reporting. The writers at Beyond the Headlines do.

Our mission is to find and offer varied opinions and discussion of key players, as well as references to historical precedents. And although it helps readers to reach informed opinions, Beyond the Headlines strives to remain objective.

Netcetera

Netcetera is “the rest of the Web.” It’s a motley, yet organized collection of hand picked sites, articles and multimedia that our team of writers and researchers finds compelling. Netcetera spotlights what is entertaining and thought-provoking online, whether it’s old video footage of a great comedian, a virtual tour of a distant country, a resource-filled article on an issue of interest, or a profile of an inspiring person. Netcetera, like the rest of our site, aims to bring fresh information to our users daily.

There are millions of sites on the Web, and the Netcetera team wants users to learn of many that are worthwhile. We tell you why we pick the things we do by supplementing bookmark-worthy links with observations and annotations about the topics that people are writing, blogging, and video blogging about.

¹² Jackson, B., & Jamieson, K (2007). *Un-spun finding facts in a world of [disinformation]*. New York: Random House, 131.

Freed, L. American Customer Satisfaction Index: Annual E-Business Report, ForeSee Results. Customer Satisfaction with Search Engines. http://www.foreseeresults.com/Thank_ACSIAug2007.html. Accessed September 28, 2007.

¹³ (No Author). “Internet News Audience Highly Critical of News Organizations Views of Press Values and Performance: 1985-2007.” The Pew Center for the People and the Press. <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2007/1/Stephens.asp>. Accessed September 28, 2007.

¹⁴ Stephens, M. (2007, January/February). “Beyond the News.” *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2.

FindingDulcinea enhances the trove of information that the Internet offers, making it more accessible and useful for all users—grandmothers and collegiate technocrats alike. Every user of findingDulcinea will become a more efficient and effective online researcher. In addition, FindingDulcinea will continue to grow and evolve. As online content and technology appears and changes, we will stay abreast of those developments. Our writers will refresh and revisit their recommendations regularly so that our users' searches yield the most current information available.

Our aim is to help users gain command over the Internet, so they can feel inspired and empowered—rather than intimidated and frustrated—by today's technology. When information is the currency and the language, anybody who has a platform and a voice can have an impact. Everybody can be informed and engaged—if they choose to be. FindingDulcinea helps people make that choice.