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so many fake sites. this is the first one which worked! Many thanks

Kilmer (2002), in his article "So much information, so little time: evaluating Web resources with search engines", states, "An abundance of search engines tools can be used to retrieve information from the World Wide Web. Search Engine Watch (2001) reports that more than 75 search engine tools are available and provide links to many relevant sources" (P.21). However, in using search engines on the web to retrieve information, one must be cognizant of the many deleterious situations one can encounter with the web page and its search engine. For instance, search engines can retrieve pages out of context, and one must try to return to the "home page" to determine the source of information. Another problem with search engines is getting the information filtered. In other words, it may take a number of "hits" before one reaches the relevant information. The source of information is difficult to determine because the authorship of the web resource is missing. The author's qualifications are frequently absent, and the publisher responsibility is often not indicated on the web page. The instability of web pages is another drawback. Users may not be able to refer back to a web page because of its constant dynamic changes.

There are a number of ways to gauge the performance of search engines. Three of the key points are as follows:

Key Point Number 1: Not all search engines find the same information. Kilmer (2002) states, " This can be attributed to the fact that different search engines are used, as well as the fact that each engine belongs to a different category of search tool" (P. 21). Each search engine is different in its own search capabilities, and needs certain information in order to retrieve the relevant or needed information. Some search engines are more apt in finding a specific piece of data, document or site requested, while others retrieve tons of information. Some search engines utilize indexing software agents often called "robots" or "spiders". These agents are programmed to constantly "crawl" the web search of new or updated pages. Furthermore, each engine search tool is dependent and differs in its database for finding information.

Key Point Number 2: Retrieval effectiveness of the search results. Two types of measures are used to evaluate the retrieval effectiveness of search engines; recall and precision. "Recall measures how well an engine retrieves all the relevant documents, whereas precision measures how well the system retrieves only the relevant documents" (Blair and Maron 1985). In other words, recall is the percentage of sites we want that were retrieved, while precision is the percentage of sites retrieved that we want. Figure 1 below depicts a graphical representation of recall and precision.

Figure 1

In the above figure, U represents the "web universe", all included. Areas A, B, and C, represent three search engines. In areas A are the sites that we want, but always miss, whereas in area C are the sites we do not want, but always receive. Areas A plus B are the sites we want to see, and, areas B plus C are the sites we get in return. The recall process for these three engines is calculated by dividing Area B by the addition of Areas A and B. Dividing Area B by the sum of areas B and C calculates the precision process.

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