



Everything is searchable

By Molly Morris, memDesigns, October 2007
© Molly Morris, All rights reserved

I was recently asked – “Who owns the Internet?” It’s a good question with an interesting answer which I wanted to write about, but you’re going to have to wait until next month. In the process of doing some research on the history of the web, I got terribly distracted and spent too much time playing with some new Google search utilities I tripped over. Since many of these tools were new to me, I want to share them with you. So here is a list of Google search tools and interesting ways of doing searches that you may not have heard of before. **Word of warning: Don’t get started down this road if you don’t have a little time to spare!**

Calculations: Google has a built-in calculator function. Enter any mathematical calculation (2514*76+9) in the Google search box and your first result will be the answer. (Remember – ‘*’ is the multiplication symbol on the computer.)

Currency Conversion: Google also has a built-in currency converter. Enter the conversion you’re looking for in the search box (for instance ‘100 CAD in USD’ or ‘100 Canadian dollars in American dollars’) and voila – an answer we haven’t seen in over 30 years!

Definitions: To see a definition of a word, type the word ‘define’ followed by a colon and a space and then the word you want defined (for instance ‘define: entrepreneur’). Your results will show a list of definitions and their sources.

Weather: Just type in the word ‘weather’ followed by a space and the location for which you want weather information (for instance ‘weather Palm Beach’ – yes, I’m thinking about somewhere warm because winter is coming to Toronto). In most cases you’ll get a 4-day visual forecast, but for some locations you’ll simply get a link to the local weather information website.

Specialized Number Searches: Here’s where I really lost some time this morning. Not that I was searching for anything useful whatsoever, I was just amazed at the accuracy of this search tool. Google’s search engine recognizes certain sets of numbers as specific number types. You can currently search UPS tracking numbers, FedEx tracking numbers, Vehicle ID (VIN) numbers, UPC codes and telephone area codes simply by entering the numbers only (you don’t need to tell Google what kind of a number it is) into the search box. You can also search patent numbers, but for best results you should enter the word ‘patent’ and a space before the number (for instance ‘patent 20070128317’ – martini popsicles – why didn’t I think of that?)

Google also has several specialized search engines, many of which you probably already use (like Images, Maps and News). There are some new ones though, either just out or in Beta version that are interesting new additions.

Google Blog Search – www.google.com/blogsearch – searches for topics within blogs.

Google Scholar – www.google.com/scholar – searches scholarly literature by author, topic or title. The results contain full bibliographic information.

Google Books – www.google.com/books – searches the full text of books. If a book is in the public domain (no longer subject to copyright) you can page through the entire book, download it, save it, and print it to PDF.

Google Alerts – www.google.com/alerts – provides email updates on the latest relevant Google search results based on your choice of topic (i.e. developing news stories, industry news, celebrities or sports teams).

Did you ever wonder what the **I'm Feeling Lucky** button next to the Google Search button is for? If you enter a search term and press **I'm Feeling Lucky**, you will be taken directly to the web page of the first search result.

If you know of any other neat search capabilities, please let me know and I will share them on this blog.