



CLASS ACTION

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Beyond Google - Alternate Search Engines Enhance Research

By Beverly Butula from Davis &Kuelthau.

The majority of us in the legal field utilize the Internet on a daily basis. Email access and research via the Web is commonplace. Research conducted could range from locating a phone number, to obtaining a government form, to gathering company data, to finding a recent decision. If the searcher is not sure of the URL, a list of possible Web pages is usually retrieved through a search engine.

Studies have shown that Google (www.google.com) is the most commonly used search engine. Google is wonderful and is this writer's first stop for most general searches. However, individuals who research for a living take it a step further and run their query in more than one search engine. Why? Because the results from each engine, either the ranking and/or actual sites, will be quite different in each. Don't put all your eggs in one basket, so to speak. Utilizing more than one search engine can "fill in coverage gaps" and put the currency of the indexing into perspective.

Using other search engines, virtual libraries, and portals in addition to, or instead of, Google can enhance the user's end results. Remember, no search engine will retrieve everything. In fact, most only scratch the surface. Choosing the right site to begin a project will depend on the type of information needed and what the user already knows about the subject.

Popping key terms into Google is

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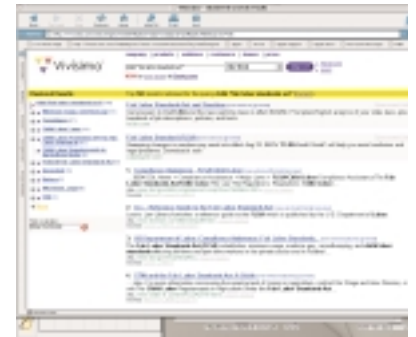
the perfect solution for obtaining quick general information. However, when conducting more in-depth research, the first step is to determine if the Web is the best resource. Consider standard book research or an online subscription based product such as Westlaw, Lexis, or LOISLAW. If the decision is to proceed via the Web, it may prove worthwhile to run the query through several search tools.

So, the next time you are conducting legal or detailed research online, try some of the sites provided below. This is only a small sampling of options available. For a more comprehensive listing, check out either Search Engine Watch (www.searchenginewatch.com) or Search Engine Showdown (www.searchengineshowdown.com).

SEARCH ENGINES:

Vivisimo (www.vivisimo.com)

This tool is a "clustering engine." It automatically categorizes the results, refining the search, and offers a very clean interface. User's can search the entire Web or limit



it to a specific source. For example, the searcher can just run the query in PubMed, FirstGov, CNN, or eBay.

Teoma (www.teoma.gov)



Teoma's index of sites is not the size of Google, but still produces a quality results list. According to its "About" page, Teoma utilizes an approach called "subject specific popularity" to rank the results.

This engine offers two special features - "Refine" and "Resources." "Refine" suggests terms, which link to a more specific outcome list, as a means to focus the search. "Resources" are links to other related topics and Web pages which may be of interest.

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Gigablast (www.gigablast.com)



The interface is very simple and it has no advertisements. Its index is extremely small compared to the major players and it even offers links to several other engines. Basically, this site promotes the use of alternative engines. However, it produces good results.

Gigablast supports Boolean operators and offers a special feature called "GigaBits". GigaBits (found at the top of the results page) are other terms that may assist in refining the initial search.

AllTheWeb (www.alltheweb.com)

This search engine, powered by Yahoo, offers Web, picture, news, video and audio



searches from its homepage. A favorite of some professional researchers, it supports Boolean operators and permits the user to "search within the results" to refine the hit list.

OTHER SEARCHING TOOLS:

FirstGov (www.firstgov.gov)



comprehensive gateway to everything government. Searching this site will lead the user to information from all levels of federal and state government. FirstGov is a portal with almost endless links to agencies, statistics, forms, laws & regulations, business resources and tribal governments.

American Law Sources Online (ALSO) (www.lawsources.com/also/)



The homepage describes this site as a "comprehensive, uniform, and useful compilation of links to freely accessible on-line sources of law for the US and Canada." In other words, it does not provide the actual information, but rather, links to the places the user needs to go. Google powers the searching and the site

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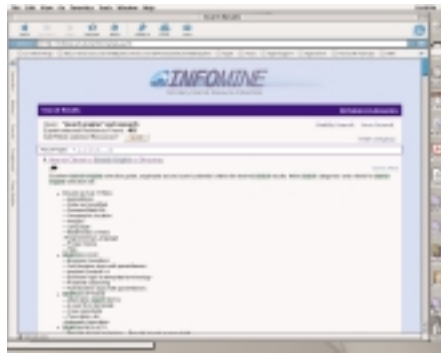
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is regularly updated.


Federal and state legal resources are presented in a very clean format. Test it out by choosing "Wisconsin". Find access to court decisions, legislation, local rules, administrative information plus much more. There is also a comprehensive listing of law reviews, uniform laws, and Amicus Curiae briefs.

InfoMine (<http://infomine.ucr.edu/>)

Created by librarians, it is a great place for academic type research. Its powerful search engine supports truncation, as well as, Boolean and proximity operators. Subject areas include: Business &



Economics, Ejournals, Government Info, Maps & GIS, and SocSci/Humanities. Because the results are "expert selected"

the hit list is usually quite small but relevant. Fee based resources are clearly marked. 

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