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Google Search Mastery Techniques

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Google Search Mastery Techniques

Abstract

Knowledge is no longer something we possess, it's now something we access. The Internet requires highly developed skills to access and interpret information. Relevant information is not the same as specific information. Previous articles in this series outlined basic search skills and operators that improve the relevancy of search results. Knowing how to formulate a specific query that will return a specific answer is critical in the 21st century. Expanding your understanding of Google Search and applying the search techniques in this article will serve you in your consumption and dissemination of content as an Extension professional.

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Introduction

Most people do not even realize that they lack digital literacy skills-in many cases, they are searching below their potential to achieve the optimal digital experience. Previous research has confirmed that a digital divide exists referring to skills, attitudes, and knowledge of technology potential rather than access to computers (Cullen, 2001). Building on the previous articles in this series, it's clear that Google is more than just a search engine (Hill, MacArthur, & Read, 2014). Only by using operators and combining them with search techniques can Extension bridge the gap in the digital divide and master Google Search (Steyaert, 2002). This article is profiles techniques in Google Search that will help Extension professionals more acutely filter search results for both professional and personal use.

Google Search Techniques

Search techniques are methods that improve a query-allowing you to ask a specific question that returns a specific answer. By including one or more of these techniques when entering search terms, you will be able to pinpoint the exact information you are looking for (Tips and Tricks, 2013).

Table 1.

Google Search Techniques

Search		
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Techniques	Example	Notes
author:	[author:blanchard]	In Google Scholar, filter search results of articles by a specific author.
define:	[define:incredulous]	Search for a definition of any word.
time:	[time:hurricane, utah]	Find the current time for any location in the world.
unit conversion	[5280 feet to miles]	Try converting currency, lengths, mass, time, temperature, and more. Type "unit conversion" in the search bar.
stocks:	[stocks:goog]	Get the latest stock performance for ticker symbols.
weather:	[weather:honolulu, hi]	Find the current weather for any location in the world.
image search	Enter search terms (i.e., noxious weeds), then click "Images"	Search for an image by dragging it into the search bar or visit images.google.com click the camera icon and select "upload image from file"
filetype:	[filetype:pdf cheatgrass]	Use ppt, doc, xls, jpg, png and others to find documents containing the other keywords in your search.
control+f	PC: Press the [Control & f] keys at the same time. Apple: Press the [command & f] keys at the same time. Android	Locates specific words on a page.

	tablets: In a browser window, touch the menu button in the top right of the screen, then select "find on page." Safari on iPad tablets: Click the cursor in the search box in the upper right corner of the screen. Directly above the keyboard, a "find on page" box will open.	
inurl:	[inurl:nacdep]	Filter search results to contain certain words in a URL.
related:	[related:4-h.org]	Find a page you like? Use related: to find similar sites.
site:	[raspberries site:extension.usu.edu] or [raspberries site:.edu]	Limit search to a specific class of sites or domain use. Including "site:" in a query will display results for a certain website. This also works when searching within specific domains such as like .org, .gov, or .edu.
intitle:	[intitle:emergency preparedness]	Limit search by specific words in title of webpage.
Note: terms inside [brackets] indicate search term examples.		

Application for Extension

It has been 100 years since the signing of the 1914 Smith-Lever Act that created the national Cooperative Extension System. As we commemorate the past, it is essential that we focus on the modern application of our programs. We must recognize that people today are more educated and informed, that knowledge is "no longer something we possess, but rather something we access." Extension professionals are no longer gatekeepers of exclusive information. To remain relevant and valuable, we must identify and teach new skills that will improve people's lives in the 21st century.

Steve Jobs declared, "A lot of times, people don't know what they want [or need] until you show it to them" (BusinessWeek, 1998). It is human nature to be curious and inquisitive; however, the ability to investigate and search does not come naturally. Search skills come the same way as any other skill:

with education and deliberate practice (Colvin, 2010). Mastering Google Search techniques and teaching them to clients is supported by research that found guided learning to be more effective than trial-and-error (Matzat & Sadowski, 2012). Digital literacy can and should be a major program area for Extension.

Conclusion

Information is bombarding everyone from various angles (Siegler, 2010). It is now up to Extension to teach people how to find specific information and discern between what is reliable and what is not (Diem, Hino, Martin, & Meisenbach, 2011). Digital literacy and discernment are technical skills people need right now in the 21st century. Mastering Google Search techniques will empower Extension as well as those we serve.

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