

Savvy searching

Savvy document delivery

Savvy searchers go out of their way to choose the best strategies to make the most cost-effective searches. They apply their skills when they:

- select the database;
- choose the most appropriate online service that carries that database;
- formulate their search strategies;
- review the results; and
- refine their query.

This is true even when they mostly search within their preferred online service, like Dialog, and decide whether to use DialogClassic or DialogWeb, the telnet or the Web access alternative, and the DialUnit or the connect-time pricing option.

Mary Ellen Bates, one of the savviest of the savvy searchers, demonstrates and explains the implications of such choices in a case study using 20 test searches which she did early in 2002, when Dialog re-introduced connect-time pricing. The paper (Bates 2002) is available free of charge (available at <http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/mar02/bates.htm>) and should be required reading for every professional searcher (except for the last test search which uses a strategy about the subject of road rage with which I disagree).

I calculated the total and average costs and savings on the sample searches reported in the Bates article. The six options she tested for the 20 searches showed a total cost range from \$285.40 (DialogWeb connect-time pricing) to \$385.08 (Dialog Classic Telnet option with DialUnit pricing). The average for the 20 searches showed a range from \$14.27 to \$19.25. In the best case scenario this is a 35 per cent saving, assuming that the searcher follows Bates' strategy, which varies from search to search to achieve the best deal.

Saving on document delivery

Savings on searches can be even greater when considering the costs of getting the documents from the online service or – still too often – from a document delivery service. This is usually the ultimate purpose of searching from the end-user's perspective. The exceptions are those cases when

bibliographic citations suffice for corroboration, or retrieving an article in sources available in the local collection.

Using an estimate of \$3.50 on average for full text display/print per record from online systems, finding alternatives for getting the documents (or at least some of the documents) free or at a significantly lower price would mean even bigger saving than the ones achieved by savvy searching. Savvy searchers have many options to find the least expensive choices for full-text document delivery, ranging from predictably free electronic versions of some journals, to pot luck availability of an article or even volumes at certain publishers' sites (such as the select articles from the many publications of Information Today, or the laudable free Journal of the Week service of Emerald).

I have written elsewhere (Jacsó, 2000, 2002) about two of the best aggregators which offer thousands of journals on a very reasonable per article fee basis (Northern Light), or on a quarterly fee basis of \$20 for unlimited number of articles (XanEdu Research Engine). The former has a powerful search engine and a smart on-the-fly classification system to cluster the results, the latter winning you over instantly with its page image format of the documents (in addition to other formats). XanEdu is still the best deal in town for those who regularly need the photocopy equivalent for articles which have charts and graphics, but in January, Yahoo! entered the scene by licensing the Special Collection of Northern Light with an unprecedented subscription rate for full-text document delivery in ASCII format.

Yahoo! Premium Document Collection

There are about 7,000 sources (journals, newspapers, TV programme transcripts, wire services and pamphlets) and 70 million full-text documents in the Yahoo! Premium Document Search Collection. My test searches have shown identical search results from Northern Light Special Collection and the Yahoo! Premium Collection, with an occasional minor discrepancy of one or two articles.

You can go directly to Premium Collection's excellent advanced query form (Figure 1) (available at <http://premium.search.yahoo.com/search/premium/options?>) or do a search in Yahoo! which in turn now shows an extra tab in addition to the usual

Figure 1 Advanced query form for Yahoo! Premium Collection

YAHOO! Help Northern Light From divine

Advanced Search

Search for:

Words in title:

Publication name:

Results from:

With: results per page

Sort Results by: Relevance Date & Time

Limit Subjects To:

<input type="checkbox"/> Arts	<input type="checkbox"/> Gov't, Law & Politics	<input type="checkbox"/> Science & Mathematics
<input type="checkbox"/> Business & Investing	<input type="checkbox"/> Health & Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences
<input type="checkbox"/> Computing & Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Humanities	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports & Recreation
<input type="checkbox"/> Contemporary Life	<input type="checkbox"/> Products & Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Reference	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment		

Select Date Range

Fill in one or both date fields to narrow your results by publication date

Start date: End date:

tabs (for categories, Web sites, Web pages, news) labelled as Research Documents (Figure 2). You may search the full text or the title field (but unfortunately not the abstract alone or with the title to narrow your search), and you may limit the search to a specific journal and/or to a time period.

Proximity search operators (especially the NEAR operator) would be useful, but exact searching with truncation does a good job for precision, and the results can be sorted by relevance (as perceived by the software, of course) or date. The query "copyright infrin* brit*" would find articles about copyright infringers in Britain, British copyright infringement cases, (and also infringing the copyright of Britney Spears), but the article which uses only infringement of copyright would not be retrieved, unless you add "infring* of copyright" with an OR operator to the original query. The results list is displayed immediately in an efficient manner, showing bibliographic details and a small extract from the abstract, which usually allows you to decide if it is worthwhile to click on the item for further details (Figure 3).

Figure 2 Extra tab for research documents

[infrin* brit* Categories](#) | [Web Sites](#) | [Web Pages](#) | [News](#) | [Research Documents](#)

Figure 3 Result list

YAHOO! Welcome, lischair! - Help - Sign Out Northern Light From divine

Search Results

Your search: "copyright infrin*" brit [Categories](#) | [Web Sites](#) | [Web Pages](#) | [News](#)

Research Documents 1 - 100 of 167 [Next 67 >](#)

- [Copyright in the digital age: a comparative survey - 07/22/2001](#)
Articles & General info - As a result of the development of the Internet and other electronic technologies, drafters of intellectual property laws the world over have been faced with some unprecedented challenges.
Rutgers Computer & Technology Law Journal: [More results](#) from this publication
- [Foreign developments--Co. law in Australia--fair dealing for research or s... 07/01/2001](#)
Articles & General info - The Australian (Federal) Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000, which is a comprehensive and all-inclusive response to the fast-evolving nature of the Internet, has kept up the tradition and included the defense of fair dealing for the purpose of research or study
Journal of Law & Education

While the collection is overwhelmingly North American, this simple search yielded more than 40 documents which are pertinent to the case I am to pursue in the UK for what I consider as wilful infringement for financial gain of my copyright, which I explicitly retained in the contract with a former publisher. While I still may need to hire a barrister in the UK, the savings I achieved doing this search in this new full-text database instead of, say, Lexis-Nexis, which charges minimum \$3.00 for each article (still a pretty good price compared with the charges levied by document delivery services), is quite significant.

For less than \$5.00 I could access most of the articles by simply activating a subscription which allows (within one month of opening the account) the downloading of up to 50 qualifying documents (see below). Yes, that is 10 cents per article, and it does not matter how long an article is. This is less than the per page charge which would have been incurred (not to mention the trouble of copying) even if the journals had been in the local collection.

Many of the articles from my search are from first class scholarly legal sources, and some of them are long or very long, totalling nearly 1,000 pages (Figures 4 and 5). I also found useful articles from *Information Management Journal* and *Library Trends*, and the professional library and information technology journals are very well represented. The qualifying documents to which the \$4.95 subscription applies are from about 60 per cent of the journals, and in my case almost all of the articles were from those journals. For

Figure 4 Very long article from a scholarly law journal

YAHOO! Help Northern Light From divine

Document Summary

Title: Owning digital copies: copyright law and the incidents of copy ownership
Source: William and Mary Law Review
Date: 04/01/2001
Price: \$2.95 (subscription document)
Document Size: Approximately 75 pages, with 11 Table(s)
Document ID: UJ20002102060842002
Subject(s): Digital recording--Laws, regulations, etc.; Copyright--Laws, regulations, etc.; Consumer electronics industry; Copyright law, Law

Citation Information: (ISSN 0043-5589), Vol. 42 No. 4 Pg. 1245
Author(s): Joseph P. Liu
Document Type: Article

Summary: As copyrighted works are increasingly distributed in digital form over the Internet, our conventional print-based understandings of the rights associated with copy ownership are coming into increasing conflict with the copyright owner's right to restrict copying. Specifically, certain common activities, such as reading and transferring physical copies of copyrighted works (such as books), are increasingly being viewed as potential acts of copyright infringement when applied to digital copies

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 Get this article for \$2.95

the journals not included in the \$4.95 subscription package, the per document charges are between \$1.00 and \$3.00.

The Yahoo! Premier Collection subscription package is an exceptionally good deal, covering a large number of prestigious journals and using good software. The \$4.95 subscription fee for 50 articles of unlimited length is so low that even if you find only a couple of relevant articles, the saving is worth your time, and beats the cost of using a traditional online service for getting the article. The saving can be gargantuan when you compare this subscription fee with the cost you would incur with any of the document delivery services, many of which charge untenable copyright fees which do not

Figure 5 Long article from another scholarly law journal

YAHOO! Help Northern Light From divine

Document Summary

Title: Links, frames, meta-tags and trolls
Source: International Review of Law, Computers & Technology
Date: 12/01/1999
Price: \$2.95 (subscription document)
Document Size: Medium (3 to 7 pages)
Document ID: PN20000224020000030
Subject(s): Internet, Web sites, Court decisions, Infringement

Citation Information: ISSN 1360-0869, Vol. 13 No. 3, p. 317-323
Author(s): Robert Bond
Document Type: Article

Summary: The legal and regulatory issues affecting the internet and web sites in particular are examined together with the various infringements committed in cyberspace which have been jargonized with such names as linking, framing, metatagging and trolling. An attempt is made to demystify this emerging area of the law. The case law in the UK and the US including Ticketmaster v. Microsoft, Shetland Times v. Shetland News, Washington Post v. Total News and Godfrey v. Demon Internet is examined. Practical advice for those designing, administering and hosting web sites and web services is provided.

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match the ones set by the copyright holder, directly or through the Copyright Clearance Center and/or its British counterpart, the Copyright Licensing Agency. That will be the topic of my next column.

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 Jacsó, P. (2000), "On the way to information Xanadu", *Information Today*, Vol. 17 No. 9, pp. 38-9.
 Jacsó, P. (2002), "Northern Light still shines on", *Information Today*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 30-2.