

## **Search**

By

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## I. Background

Many years ago, I received, as many of you did, my first home computer system. My wife, Georgia, configured my new computer and helped me connect to the Internet. My first search was to find information on Masonry. I met a group of brothers on Prodigy, people like myself, and became involved in the first Masonic group, "ERL 1". I held discussions with many people from around the world. I remember to this very day the excitement I felt at being connected to people from all over the globe.

I joined the Oasis Computer club at Kena Temple. I knew that the club had files on research papers from many Masonic groups. A. Douglas Smith, Jr. papers were among those that I wanted to download. After signing up, my wife helped me connect to the site and showed me how to execute the downloads. She went out and left me alone and on my own with Oasis.

While I was online, out of nowhere in the upper left-hand corner of my screen, appeared the words, "Hi Paul". It scared me and so, not knowing what else to do, I turned off the computer. I waited a few minutes and powered up the TX and signed on again. A few minutes later while looking over the files and trying to decide which to download first, "Hi Paul" appeared again. Again, I didn't know what to do, so, off went the computer for the second time. All I could think was that my wife had to be playing a trick on me. She went to work and was playing with my mind. I called her office number and she was not there. I turn on the TX and signed on to the Oasis one more time and went to look for a paper to download. At just that second, the message appeared again and this time it said "Paul, talk to me". At that point, I thought that God was trying to talk to me, which was quite disconcerting, so again, off went the TX.

I sat for an hour or so and waited for my wife's return home. I asked her if she had set me up somehow, and told her that it was not funny. We went up to my office and fired up the computer again. This time, while I showed her what I had been doing, the message came again and was more stern "Paul, talk to me...this is Preston Burner your SYSOP. Use CHAT". We called Preston, and he and my wife had a good laugh at my expense.

My start was shaky, but I have learned more about my system with the help from many brothers and my wife. I learned how to use my computer. It has been many moons since then and I have been around the world asking questions about Freemasonry.

I am not a whiz, nerd, computer guru, or space cowboy. I do not talk techno-babble. I have picked up some tools and sites which I would like to share with you brothers who, if you have computers and just use them for e-mail, can now search the World-Wide Web (WWW) and find more light in Freemasonry.

## II. Important Things to Know before You Begin Searching the Web

### A. *What are you really searching for?*

Finding the Web documents (a.k.a. Web "pages" or "sites") you want can be easy or seem impossibly difficult. This is in part due to the sheer size of the WWW, currently estimated to contain 1 billion sites. It is also because the WWW is not indexed in any standard way, like a library would be and there are no other standardized subject descriptors.

When you search the Web you are NOT searching it directly. It is not possible to search the WWW directly. The web is totality of many web pages which reside on computers (servers) all over the world. It can not find or go to all the servers directly. What you do is access one of several databases/web-pages which hold selections of other web-pages and

allow you to find even more (search tools). Search tools provide you with hypertext links (URLs) to other pages. You click on these links, and retrieve documents, images, sound and more from servers around the world.

At present, it may be useful to describe the kinds of intermediate search tools available to you in five categories. You use different strategies to find and use the greatest potential of the tools in each category.

I recommend beginning with different types of search tools, depending upon what you know about your topic. Do you want broad information? Are you looking for something very specific or a unique term or phrase? Are you looking for a narrow aspect of a topic with a huge Web presence? When you search, are you overwhelmed by too many or non-related results? Are there a lot of terms for the same thing you are searching for? Use a Search Strategy.

#### B. *How do you define your Search Strategy?*

I found a 5 step search strategy that has helped me find many Masonic related topics and books.

##### Five – Step Strategy

- |         |                                                              |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step #1 | Analyze your topic to decide where to begin (see worksheet). |
| Step #2 | Pick the right starting place.                               |
| Step #3 | Learn as you go & vary your approach with what you learn.    |
| Step #4 | Don't bog down in any strategy that doesn't work.            |
| Step #5 | Return to previous strategies that have better information.  |

Some strategies work and some don't. Browsing is sometimes fun but is not a very efficient way to use directories. Browsing locates documents by trying to match your topic in the first top, broadest layer of subject hierarchy, then by choosing a visible category in the WWW, you hope a lead will appear. Sometime it takes a guess as to what it is you are looking for. Using a search box is the same, it is

better to try your keywords. Beware of the word "advanced". Some search tools use this tool in the same way as they use the word box. Remember that some sites are there only for commercial interest. The user should always look out for these sites that keep you on their site and don't deliver anything. Some sites only want a count so they can say they are the largest. Make your own evaluations.

### III. Five Types of Search Tools

#### A. *Search engines*

Search engines are huge and often retrieve a lot of information. They retrieve pages by matching words in the pages from databases of web texts from the "general" WWW. They contain the good, the bad and the ugly. Double check what you find before you believe it or use it. Google, for example, is a very detailed search engine.

Some Search Engines:

[www.google](http://www.google)

[www.av.com](http://www.av.com) click on Advanced Search

[www.northernlight.com/power](http://www.northernlight.com/power)

[www.kena.org/hiram](http://www.kena.org/hiram)

[www.looksmart.com](http://www.looksmart.com)

[www.hotbot.lycos.com](http://www.hotbot.lycos.com)

[www.thefreemason.com](http://www.thefreemason.com)

[www.2be1ask1.com](http://www.2be1ask1.com)

#### B. *Subject directories*

Subject directories are a selection of web pages which have been organized into subject categories by people. You can search or browse the content of the directories. You can believe the content more than the search engine. The larger the subject the less reliable the quality of the search be. They contain general web pages and often list some searchable databases and gateway pages as well.

Some Subject Directories:

[www.lii.org](http://www.lii.org) Librarians' Index

[www.infomine.ucr.edu](http://www.infomine.ucr.edu) Infomine

[www.academicinfo.net](http://www.academicinfo.net) Academic Info

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) Yahoo!

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com) About.com

### C. Directories of searchable databases

Databases are organized in subject categories, are searchable and browsable, and are assembled by people who evaluate the contents and give pointers on the use of each database listed. They offer search boxes and links to all kinds of databases on the WWW not found in the general web sites, and therefore, not findable by search engines or listed subject directories. The billions of documents you can retrieve by searching these specialized databases are called the "invisible" or "deep" web, which contrast with the "visible" in search engines which list the "shallow" web.

Some Searchable Databases:

[www.invisibleweb.com](http://www.invisibleweb.com) The Invisible Web Catalog

<http://gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gprice/direct.htm>  
Direct Search

<http://www.internets.com/> Internets

<http://www.incywincy.com> IncyWincy

<http://www.leidenuniv.nl/ub/biv/specials.htm>  
A Collection of Search Engines

<http://www.completeplanet.com/>  
Complete Planet

<http://www.searchpower.com/> Search Power

<http://internetoracle.com/>

<http://web.ntu.edu.sg/library/specialcat.htm>

### Special Search Engines

#### D. Directories of Gateway Pages

Gateway Pages are collections of general web pages of a unique value and are organized by subjects which are searchable and browsable. They are made up by experts who have spent a lot of time searching the web and assembling guides to a subject, discipline, etc. They are a great value in doing academic research.

Some Gateway Pages:

<http://www.cavin.edu/library/searreso/intermet/as/> AlphaSearch

<http://www.clearinghouse.net/> Argus Clearinghouse

<http://conbio.rice.edu/vi/database>  
WWW Virtual Library

<http://members.spree.com/atheneum/mguide1.htm> The New Atheneum

<http://www.suite101.com/>  
Suite101.com

#### E. MetaSearch Engines

MetaSearch engines are search engines that search more than one place at once and then compile the results in a convenient display, consolidating the results into a uniform format and listing. They may be valuable for a first pass in many searches, but for serious and in-depth research, they lack the power of the best search engines. New metasearch technology is coming out all the time and should improve.

Some MetaSearch Engines:

[www.seek123.com](http://www.seek123.com) Seek123

[www.ixquick.com](http://www.ixquick.com) Ixquick

[www.copernic.com](http://www.copernic.com) Copernic

[www.searchcaddy.com](http://www.searchcaddy.com) SearchCaddy

[www.profusion.com](http://www.profusion.com) Profusion

[www.metacrawler.co](http://www.metacrawler.co) MetaCrawler

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Never be afraid to ask for help from the sites you are using. 2be1ask1. We have all done it once or twice. Use groups, they are only too glad to help point the way. It has been a pleasure to chat, e-mail, phone, and write with people all over the world and talk about this craft in which we learn so many things.

I would like to thank my wife for the years of teaching this dog new tricks. Without her, the nights would have been longer and most of all, it saves us money on my book orders. As a note to all of you search dudes, always remember to share what you find and post a better site when you find one.