

Meeting Report: Searching the Internet: Google and beyond March 2006, Birmingham University Library

I work as a Content Coordinator for Altis <http://www.altis.ac.uk>

Altis is part of the Resource Discovery Network (RDN) <http://www.rdn.ac.uk>

As the title suggests, the RDN is all about electronic resources. We scour the Internet, sourcing resources for our subject gateways, of which there are eight. Resources are evaluated according to their relevance, authority and accessibility. First and foremost resources must be freely available on the web. We then assess their relevance to a particular subject area within the past sixteen learning and research communities.

I am therefore constantly on the look out for new resources to support learning and research in hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism; the subjects supported by Altis. As well as sourcing resources I am keen to find out about the new search engines that are around and to learn new tips for improving my search strategies.

That is why I signed up for this workshop, and the fact that it came recommended by a colleague who had previously attended the same workshop in London. Karen Blakeman, of RBA Information Services <http://www.rba.co.uk/> is highly regarded in the profession and I wasn't disappointed. Her presentation style is very clear and considering that there was a huge amount of content to cover in just one day she managed to get through it all without leaving us with a feeling of bewilderment as can often happen. Although I felt quite bombarded with information I did not feel confused or did not feel lacking in my understanding of the content. On the contrary the feeling of bombardment was very positive as I had discovered some excellent new searching tools and picked up some top tips to enable me to find some new resources for Altis.

My particular favourite is <http://mindset.research.yahoo.com/> as this enables you to refine your results set according to whether you are shopping or researching. Other search engines highlighted in the workshop enable the user to compare results sets from different search engines side by side. This helped to illustrate why Google is not necessarily the best option!

Karen also talked about specific tools for finding audio visual content, advanced search techniques, different file formats and news services. Particular attention was given to wikis, blogs and RSS feeds. The session allowed plenty of time for hands-on so that we could put all of the theory into practice. Delegates were free to ask questions at any time, which helped contribute to the relaxed nature of the workshop. There was plenty of time for networking too with refreshment breaks and an hour for lunch.

In conclusion, I would highly recommend this workshop to anyone who uses the Internet as part of their daily work routine. Even more experienced users will benefit – we can never know everything, can we?

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