Bronzed skin over rippling muscles, the gleam of oil smoothed over strong bodies... got your attention? Well, it's time to continue wrestling with the search process. Back to the mats! When last we left the search, we had interviewed the requestor, decided on a broad strategy (Good and Fast, Good and Cheap, or Fast and Cheap), and chosen the databases and search services to do the job. Now what? (Part 1 of this article appeared in the May 1991 issue of ONLINE.)

SEARCH STRATEGY FORMULATION

According to scholarly folklore, search strategies popularly come in three basic flavors, like ice cream. Instead of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry, the formulas are building blocks, pearl growing, and successive fractions [1]. (See the sidebar, "Skinning Cats," on page 30.) Different scholars of the fine art of searching cite additional approaches more or less independent of the basic three. Like a Neapolitan ice cream sandwich, most good searches combine flavors to suit individual tastes.

Speaking of taste, my personal bias appears in the section on Terms and Search Statements on page 31. Bloodied but unbowed from gang war encounters with database producers and their minions, I remain a defiant exponent of free-text search construction. Search the entire text for your terms. Make your own phrases. Use thesauri to generate lists of free-text terms and phrases. Rely on index terms provided by database producers only when necessary, e.g., in provision of key codes not attainable any other way. Use controlled terminology to limit a search, not to initiate one.

Using controlled terminology automatically triggers certain limits in using a file. The two most obvious are date limitation and indexer failure. Since almost no database ever reloads old records with new subject terms, using indexer-provided subject headings developed after the beginning of the file will eliminate all records that entered the file before the indexers approved the subject heading. In the case of single-word terms, the normal instinct of search service software to provide free-text access would usually retrieve all records with the term unless the searcher indicated descriptor-only in the search statement. Some search services, however (e.g., National Library of Medicine), do not offer that protection for searcher forgetfulness. In many search software protocols, using search phrases without phrase connectors restricts terms to indexer-provided controlled vocabulary. In some files, controlled vocabulary will prove deceptively friendly with jargon retrieval of scattered references from the shadow world of "identifiers" — unborn descriptors caught halfway between real world language and a thesaurus. Recognize what's happening. If you want references restricted, take advantage of the short cut. But take warning! The short cut that eliminates free-text terminology...
Terms And... Terms

Terms do not have to be, well, terms. They can be a single word, or a phrase linked by phrase operators, or a phrase assigned by an indexer, or a group of words or phrases. They can take on different construction in different fields. An author or journal devoted to one topic or one angle on a topic may affect search results like a block of subject terms. For example, Business Week articles about a world event could be equivalent to an economic or corporate focus on a topic while Congressional Record references to the same topic could cover public policy angles. Citation searching usually substitutes footnoting of an article written on a topic by an author for subject headings by indexers. The natural connection of scholarly communication forms the link between documents. The same approach appears in legal literature by following case citations or "Shepard-izing." A database itself can constitute an equivalent by the literature it covers or the indexing it supplies.

Term phrases carry automatic connections within connections. For example, any phrase operators automatically create an AND relationship. If you retrieve records by linking two words in some particular word order, obviously the retrieved records had to have the two words appearing in the same document. Some phrase operators perform almost the same function as Boolean operators linking the appearance of terms in a record or a field.

EQUIVALENCY OF TERMS

Some search services introduce their own equivalency links. Equivalent terms can include obvious linguistic matches, such as singular or plural versions of a term or alternative spellings, or obvious conceptual links, such as alternative names for the same thing or very close to the same thing (e.g., USSR=Russia=Soviet Union). The EasyNet Knowledge Gateway service for end-users builds lots of invisible equivalencies. For example, they usually link terms connected by spaces with NEAR operators within two to three words in any word order. Mead Data Central more than competes with Telebase's EasyNet with all its invisible "fixes" — automatic singularization and pluralization, geographic equivalencies, document section or segment matches (e.g., minor column title changes), etc.

LINKING TERMS

Nesting, or surrounding terms or search sets with parentheses, can link groups of terms or groups of blocks. It can also override natural search order. The natural search order common to each database software automatically performs links, sometimes with surprising results. For example, the BRS/Search software defaults to OR when it sees words in a search statement separated by spaces. However, once a user has inserted a phrase operator such as ADJ or ADJACENT for immediate word order, the system assumes all terms after that term separated only by a space want to use the same connector. In contrast, when DIALOG software sees a word separated from another word by a space in a search statement with no prefix field tag preceding it, the software usually assumes the searcher wants a subject heading phrase assigned by an indexer and restricts retrieval to descriptor or identifier fields automatically. Behind the scenes, software gurus can change parameters for different conditions. For example, BRS/Colleague's end-user service for health professionals has chosen to default words separated by spaces to ADJ phrases, not Boolean OR connections.

-BQ
Skinning Cats

As the old saying goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat and more than one way to approach a search. The basic approaches to a search strategy continue to fall in three main approaches, described in 1982 by Don Hawkins and Bob Wagers.  

BUILDING BLOCKS

Break down all the concepts in a search into their logical groupings. Draw relationships between the groups using standard Boolean logic — OR (any and all citations using any and all terms in the blocks), AND (only citations when terms from one block appear with terms from the other), NOT (only citations from the first block that do not mention any terms from the next block). Fill the concept blocks with terms that are synonymous or equivalent, i.e., terms linked by an OR logic. Some blocks may be sub-blocks in an OR relationship to each other. You may still want to keep them separate because of different approaches to different databases.

PEARL GROWING

Target the bulls-eye: the perfect citation, the perfect search result set. Find something right on target and build outward in a sequence of searches following leads from the sure winners. One good article leads to one good author leads to one good co-author leads to one good school of thought leads to... and so on. One good product leads to one good manufacturer leads to one good SIC code leads to... You get the idea.

SUCCESSIVE FRACTIONS

Slice the salami. Modify the search set. Get one giant set that encompasses every possible reference to the topic. Then just keep adding concepts from the broadest to the most specific, from the most search-intrinsic to the less promising. Each successive search term uses an AND logical relationship to shave off the less relevant from the total. At the end of the process, you have the best you can get.

VARIATIONS IN STRATEGIES

Variations on these basic three depend on specific search situations. For example, a variation on the Building Blocks approach, the "Pair-Wise Facets" strategy, works when ANDing three or more building blocks together produces zero or not enough results. The searchers renegotiate with the machines for any set that combines one building block with any other combination of building blocks. For example, if "Block 1 AND Block 2 AND Block 3" yields nothing, how about "(Block 1 AND (Block 2 OR Block 3))" or even "(Block 1 AND Block 3) OR (Block 2 AND Block 3)"? As you can see, this gets pretty tricky, sort of like a policy of international appeasement.

Pearl growing has its variations too. In a broad search encompassing many databases, searchers can use a "Sampler" approach to generate sets of high-precision results from a number of databases or sources. Individual strategies for each database or source may stem from building block or other basic approaches. When the dust clears, the researcher should have enough information from each source or source type to redesign the general strategy focused around the most promising leads. The "Sampler" approach also helps in evaluating the comprehensiveness of a search. When searchers cannot use every possible source, they may still take a quick peek to see what they're missing.

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time? If initial controls must prevail, are there any ways around the limitations? For example, could you substitute lists of footnotes or references in relevant current articles for manual searches of earlier printed indexes? Or would limiting search results to items immediately accessible through local collections and arranging for messenger service substitute for full-text delivery? Would the cost of such arrangements in expanded search time and personnel expense be cheaper and more effective than full-text searching?

**Terms And Search Statements**

What words and phrases express key concepts? Does a selected database's design and content open up new terminology? What terms are synonymous with others? Are there any special problems with synonyms, e.g., need for foreign language versions? Do any synonyms have alternative meanings likely to retrieve irrelevant material? Did the projected number of false drops warrant a preventive strategy? Could matching synonyms to other terms eliminate the problem? Do certain synonyms have a limited lifetime that could affect other factors in a search such as dates or geography? Do some synonyms incorporate other block concepts in their usage (e.g., highly-specific jargon only used in certain fields)? Will such terms require special handling, e.g., separate entry without adding to other blocks?

Do you need tools such as dictionaries, *Roget's Thesaurus*, database manuals, and subject- or database-specific thesauri to generate synonym lists? Could the online search itself generate enough synonyms, e.g., through scanning online thesauri or inverted indexes or just looking at relevant search results? Do you need personal contacts to generate terms, e.g., other searchers experienced with certain databases or subject experts?

**What form of expression for the terms does the search service's software require?** Must you precede your terms with commands or just enter them immediately? Will you have menus to help you? What kind of phrase operators will you need? What does the software retrieve when you enter phrases without phrase operators? Do specific fields for specific files require special formats for data entry? Which fields on which files do full-text search options offer sufficient flexibility (e.g., searcher-specified distance between terms with different proximity operators, terms within proximity of themselves, etc.)? Does the software cover multiple approaches for certain fields, e.g., both phrase-specific and free-text? Which elements of the search require less frequently used commands, e.g., date coverage with a LIMIT command? Does the search software produce automatic, invisible equivalences, e.g., automatic singularization and pluralization or alternative spellings? Will you need to override the automatic controls, e.g., by using literals around specific terms?

**Feedback In Search Planning**

What have you forgotten? What are the silent failings of specific fields in specific files? What opportunities could one search service's handling of a file offer over another's (e.g., more flexible proximity limits in full-text, full-record searching, automatic limiting of search terms to all but one or two fields, easy scanning of terms as they appear in fields, etc.)? Which rarely used commands would be appropriate to this search? Does the search software offer any special commands that generate search terms or search statements, e.g., ORBIT's GET or DIALOG's MAP commands? How much reliance does your strategy place on key fields or key features? Is it enough to warrant an investigation before using the file? Have you double-checked the documentation?

Did you make a final check of your initial assumptions? Does any discovery made during the search strategy formulation phase change basic search expectations? Do you need to contact your requestor again before continuing? Do you need authorization for more money or more time? Do you need alternative databases, search services, and/or searchers? Should you check tools you did not use initially, e.g., a database directory or other documentation? Did you make notes of any facts that could affect critical judgment of final output? Did you remember to double-check whether the search will track the requestor's own citations effectively? Have your expectations of success changed substantially?

**The Online Search**

Showtime! Even with the search strategy all drawn up and written down, "psych-ing" up for a search never hurts. At this stage, cost and time factors tend to dominate one's thinking. Traditionally, online databases charge according to session-specific, usage-based formulae. Connect time charges figure prominently in most search service charging schemes. Hit charges often vary with the amount and type of information received and comprise the other dominant component of usage-based charges. Some services price by function performed. Generally speaking, the faster you search, the cheaper you search.

Generalities aside, the specifics of the situation may dictate other concerns. Never search so fast that you don't watch what you're doing. Always expect to learn from the search process itself and adapt strategy as you fly by. And always remember that the machine will still be there the rest of the day or tomorrow or next week. If you need time to analyze results and rethink your approach, go offline and regroup.

Always expect to learn from the search process itself and adapt strategy as you fly by.

**Is the search equipment in order?** Enough paper in the printer? Enough disk space on the disks? What file name will you use for downloaded results? If you plan to default to the buffer file, will it damage older data? Will the software download into the right subdirectory and file name? If you download in two steps, will the software append the second chunk or erase the first chunk by writing over it? What are the log-on procedures, passwords, "hand-shaking" protocols, etc.? What speed will you use? Does your ability to scan output visually on a particular service conk out above a certain connect speed? If so, how do you instruct the machine to feed you one screen at a time? Or do you need

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to adjust your search technique to allow for offline review of exploratory results, e.g., with interrupted search sessions or the buffer function on communication software.

How might alternative approaches to reviewing results at top speeds affect total cost? If most database costs involve connect hour charges, would interrupting and reinstituting a search using special search service commands work better than reading buffered items while still online? If output charges dominate the cost structure, would staying online be easier and not much more expensive? Do you need to reset screen controls or other "profile" elements to improve the process (e.g., margins that match your word processing software's expectations, full word search commands, etc.)?

...searchers should often try to start small and do a series of searches based on client feedback...

What factors could slow down the search process? Will any factors permeate the whole process, e.g., a watching requestor or slow typing skills? Can you avoid or adjust any slowing factors without affecting total search quality? What factors will slow the process at specific points, e.g., lack of ease with specific protocols or databases? Should you stop the search and readjust your approach at those points? If cost concerns dominate, can you switch to some after-hours pricing option without delaying the search or limiting functionality too much?

What information will you need to keep handy during the search? Do you have ready a list of key commands, database numbers or mnemonics, field tags, format options, rate sheets, etc.? For example, do you know how to save a search request and edit it for reexecution against another file? Do you have a handy way to eliminate references you have already seen from final search results? Can you reach full documentation quickly using available printed or offline sources? Do you have contact information for customer support service or friendly expert searchers in case of a crisis? Do you know the sort of questions that go to search services and those that go to database producers? Does your telecommunication software have any specific commands you might need to review? Do you have the requestor's phone number handy in case you need additional information?

Have you reviewed your decision points? What would cause you to declare the search a success? What a failure? When will you go over budget? Do you know how to verify session or database expenditures quickly online? Does the budget include charges beyond online (e.g., searcher time, shipping and handling, overhead surcharges, etc.)? How would such charges reduce the funds available for the online search? When will time run out? Do some databases have different time standards due to the kind of material covered (answer versus reference) or other coverage issues? What databases will you search and in what order? Will some databases require rechecking (e.g., files with unusually frequent updates for a search on a "breaking story")? In general, what discoveries would cause you to abort or interrupt the search? What alternative strategies do you have ready in case of changing search conditions? What factors would cause you to take a different direction in search strategy? If you expect overlap between database output, do you have ready the tools to eliminate it (e.g., anti-duplication features or commands, saved searches for elimination from subsequent searches, etc.)?

FEEDBACK OR REVIEWING RESULTS

The essence of the online searching art lies in the interaction between the question and the answer, the searcher and the source. Next to the reference interview, the greatest demand on a searcher's judgment and experience involves following up on search results. In part, the searcher strives to see results with the client's eyes, to match discoveries to the client's need for enlightenment. At the same time, the searcher must review the performance of the online search, assess personal skills, database productivity, search software competence, etc. Properly reviewed, results educate the searcher to the competence of the search conducted and future search alternatives. And of course "honest dealer" search services present the first view of the bill with the search results. Less than "honest dealers" make searchers wait for weeks and weeks.

Unlike manual research, online searching does not impose substantial penalties on re-research. If you remember tomorrow a database you forgot to search today, it will cost you little more to search it in a new search session than it would as part of the previous session. Taking a little more time can let clients become more involved in the review process. Rather than trying to get every reference the first time round — a technique prone to producing expensive overload, searchers often try to start small and do a series of searches based on client feedback throughout the process. With the speed and instant access online databases offer, research can be transformed from a step or phase in a problem-solving process to a style or proficiency that permeates the entire process.

Are your equipment and software ready to handle online feedback? Does the connect speed affect the readability of results? Does the communication software offer a buffer to hold latest results? How, and how well does the buffer work? Can your downloading or word processing software help you scan results quickly and easily?

What did you see you didn't anticipate? Did the feedback supply new terms that fit within previous concepts? If so, how simply can you redo the search without duplicating displayed results? If you sampled results from different groupings, can you just drop the samples seen without losing the unseen references from the same groups (e.g., by using DIALOG's KEEP command)? Did the feedback supply new terms that did not fall within previous concepts? Do the new concepts suggest new databases? New strategies? How much and where would overlap occur with previous searching? How do you eliminate it?

When should you stop searching? Temporarily or permanently? What
references satisfy search needs completely? At what point, on what databases, on what services should you take what level of output for offline scanning preparatory to a revision of the search strategy? Has the search hit a cost cap? How rigid is it? If you bill for costs beyond the search itself, do you have a rule-of-thumb for determining when total costs have been reached?

What more information do you need to know (e.g., details on database coverage and design, more subject and terminological background, more information on how output will be used, etc.)? Can you find the information from database or search service documentation? Online or print? Will you need to ask expert searchers or industry customer support very specific questions about files? Do you need the requestor to look at the output before finishing the search? If more than one person will use the search results, do you need evaluation from others beyond the initial requestor? What will requestors need to assess the data (e.g., information on database content and coverage, lists of unused approaches or sources under consideration, cost information, etc.)?

Do you need a sampler of material to revise your search strategy? What kinds of results do you need for the sample? What kind of samples would the requestor need to evaluate output? Should you sample based on date (historical, contemporary, a combination)? What specific dates? Do any elements of the search require specific date information? Should you sample based on other factors (e.g., type of literature, geography, language, document availability, source, etc.)? What criteria would determine success for each or several factors selected? Should you limit to the unusual or the familiar?

Are the results satisfactory? Have you found the requestor’s own citations? Has the search “closed the loop” with material from one database echoing material from another? Can you see any new or substantially revised terminology that did not go into the original search? Do you need to reexecute the search with the new terminology and eliminate the material already seen? How large should search results be? How should you reconfigure the search to restrict excess output or to increase retrieval? How much will it cost to continue searching?

Have you filled out your statistics sheet if you are finished with the double-check the billing information? Do you need to pass information to an accounting section that handles online search billing? Do you need to create and issue the bill yourself? Now or later?

PRESENTING FINAL SEARCH RESULTS

In the bad old “good ol’ days,” presenting search results usually required only a single sweeping gesture. Rip the search off the machine and hand it to the client. Special service to absentee clients could involve stuffing, closing, and addressing an envelope, or phoning their office for a pick-up. Not fancy, as presentations go, but effective.

With the switch from dumb terminals to microcomputers as searchers workstations, an array of ancillary technologies, such as word processing, spreadsheets, desktop publishing, fax machines, electronic mail, etc., opened up new options for presenting search results. Though old ways die hard, most searchers now do a lot more preparation of search results than before. Post-search processing adds value to search results, but it can also add substantial time and expense.

What information will the requestor need to understand and critique search results? Does the requestor clearly understand what the search results do not cover? Do they need an explanation of the search strategy or would it only confuse them? Do they need a cheat sheet to explain the record structure for any or all files searched (e.g., bibliographic citation elements, order information, etc.)? Should you edit out confusing fields (e.g., code numbers, accession numbers, etc.)? Would such editing take too much time? Do requestors need details on coverage and non-coverage policies for specific information in specific files? Do they need an overall assessment of the value of results? Do the prospects for success with other files warrant a proposal to expand the search? How much could future searches cost? Does the requestor need additional information to enhance the value of the search results (e.g., local collection holdings, directory information on key sources discovered, etc.)? Do you need to augment online search results with manual searching to improve the total package?

What formats or presentation modes will increase the data’s usefulness to the requestor? Do they need machine-readable data? Print? Both? If machine-readable, what kind of storage medium with what parameters (e.g., disk size and storage capacity)? What kind of data format (e.g., binary file or ASCII text file)? Would the format of transferring data in machine-readable form offer additional protection for data quality (e.g., binary file transfer of spreadsheet data)? How critical would such quality control be to the total impact of the search? Where and how should the data be transmitted? If posted mail, express or regular? If express, charged to whom? If electronic mail, which system, using which identification number or route designation? If the searcher does not belong to the same system, does an e-mail system the searcher uses bridge to a requestor-used service? Would fax transmission work? Do available e-mail services offer fax outlets? How much additional cost will special formats entail? Who will pay and how much? Are there any special formats required (e.g., approved bibliographic citation styles, specific spreadsheet formats, etc.)? Can the requestor solve some problems with their own resources (e.g., secretarial help, messenger service, conversion utility software, etc.)?

How should data appear to achieve maximum effectiveness? Does the user need the data presented with special packaging?

Post-search processing adds value to search results, but it can also add substantial time and expense.

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The Searcher’s Hidden Agenda: Learning From Experience

Good searches satisfy more than clients. Even bad searches have lessons to teach. Searchers should learn to profit from searching as much as their clients do. The search process can offer many benefits beyond immediate search results. Properly conducted, the search process offers opportunities to improve the performance and efficiency of search operations, educate and market service to clients, affect management perceptions of the role information services can and should play in an organization, and enhance the images of searchers as individuals and as a class. Occasionally this may involve some additional cost or time. But the chance to improve tomorrow’s searches with today’s should make the investment worth while.

Walk with me again down the same trail we have walked before ("Inside A Searcher’s Mind: The Seven Stages Of An Online Search" — Parts 1 & 2). Only this time, let’s look at the process through the eyes of a search operation manager. What new questions appear?

REFERENCE INTERVIEW
What will the requestor do with the information? Will the information serve further clients inside or outside the organization? How much and what kind of value will the requestor and other handlers add to the data? Could the search operation or its parent information service serve internal or external clienteles as well or better at the same cost or cheaper?

How can you use the interview to educate users about online databases and other information services? Does the requestor’s understanding indicate need for a general marketing or educational program? Does the requestor have enough clout to spread the word elsewhere in the organization? Can you provide special, flashy service to influential clients? Does the request or the requestor represent a new class of questions or information needs in the organization? Can you use the interview to gain insights into those needs and prospects for serving them? Should the search operation acquire new skills, staff, equipment, or software to meet those needs? Does the individual requestor or the service community constitute a potential ally for gaining support for future information services? How does the search service maintain records on requestors (e.g., individual profiles, departmental prospect sheets, search operation statistics, etc.)? Do records need improving?

Did the requestor identify any current information resources, online or offline, unfamiliar to the searcher? What kind of information technology or software do requestors and their colleagues use? Does the requestor need the information delivered faster than current operations allow? Would greater speed or reduced costs generate sharply increased requests? If the search request indicates a recurrent need in the organization, what kind of new information sources would prove helpful? What kind of budget do alternative information sources in the organization receive? What kind of total budget does the requestor have for effective information acquisition?

TACTICAL OVERVIEW
Do the requestor’s or their department’s information needs overlap with those of any other department or section? What prospects are available for linking those information needs to provide needed service or even taking over entire information services? What resources would be required and available for such moves? What new types of personnel might a new operation need to acquire and/or manage? What critical mass would be necessary before substituting a new information service for existing services? What resources would need reassignment? What tasks might have to be dropped to pull it off?

What directions has the institution taken in general information technologies and policies? Has the search operation integrated with those new trends (e.g., LANs, new microcomputers, micro/mainframe balance of power, new communication systems, etc.)? What areas could stand improvement now and/or require

(e.g., desktop publishing, company stationery, etc.)? Does the searcher need have material evaluated by experts before presenting final results to the requestor? Does the data carry all required copyright and intellectual property notices? Does the requestor understand the importance of such warnings?

How will improving results affect the final cost? Who pays what costs? How much searcher time will editing and preparing search results require (e.g., eliminating all duplicates)? When searchers excise material, should they keep copies for possible requestor review? How long should searchers keep results? Should the searcher bill immediately using estimated online costs or wait to cross-check the monthly billing sheets? Do you need to bill immediately to insure payment? Can the search operation quickly calculate full costs for the requestor?

Is this the end of the search? Does the requestor need a current awareness profile established? Will you
adjustment in the future? How soon? At what cost? What directions or trends does the information service operation plan to support in the future? If the information technology trends in the information service differ from those in the general organization, does this indicate an educational program? For both sides?

DATABASE SELECTION

Do the searchers in the organization feel comfortable with request topics? Do they need special training on key systems and sources or background education in specific subject areas? Does the search operation need to acquire any new search services, database documentation, external searcher arrangements, etc., on a permanent basis? Do staff back each other up adequately? How would one absent searcher affect performance in different request areas?

If the information service provides document delivery, how comprehensive and timely is the service? Do search requests indicate the need for new document delivery routes (e.g., changed acquisition policies, messenger service to off-site sources, fax machines for quicker turnaround, special arrangements with special sources, etc.)? Is it time to switch information resources toward or away from online sources (e.g., from serial acquisition to full-text support)?

SEARCH STRATEGY FORMULATION

Has the search operation acquired the material needed to keep on top of database quality issues (e.g., documentation, searcher trade press, database directories, etc.)? Do searchers have time to read the literature, attend the meetings, participate in discussions with in-house and external searchers, etc.? Does the organization budget time for learning into its staff programs and procedures? How should such time budgets be allocated?

THE ONLINE SEARCH

Do you need better hardware? A new printer? New storage media? A faster modem? A fax machine? Another phone line at the search workstation? Do you need new software? A bibliographic text database manager? A high-level word processing or even desktop publishing software? Spreadsheet? Bulletin board software? When do you expect upgrades to current hardware or software will become necessary? At what cost?

Do you need handy information sheets to improve searching? Should you develop them in-house, commission their creation by external sources, or try to locate useful products for purchase? Do you need to build scripts to support end-user or occasional searcher access? Should you acquire the talent in-house or use external sources? Do you have the right telecommunication software for script-building?

FEEDBACK OR REVIEWING RESULTS

How effective is your interaction with requestors been in educating and marketing? Do you have any requests to establish or support end-user searching? Which services or databases could answer what subject needs within what cost controls? How much burden would supporting such programs place on your existing or future search staff?

How effectively have searchers communicated with each other about the lessons learned from the search process? Do they have regular communication channels? Informal or documented? How effectively do searchers communicate with management? Does management have sufficient details on costs? Do searchers know where the money goes?

PRESENTING FINAL SEARCH RESULTS

Would the search topic offer an interesting and dramatic example of successful online searching for future marketing programs? Do persons of influence understand the level of contribution the search operation made to the success of the organization in the research area? Do searchers need to add more value to the final product to upgrade its image? What skills or specialties must the search operation add to guarantee reliable, visibly improved value to search results?

Does the search operation need to substantially upgrade its capacity for presenting finished product? Does it need to distribute results through alternative telecommunication channels (e.g., fax, e-mail, bulletin boards, binary file transfer with error-correcting protocols, etc.)? Does it need to acquire licenses for distributing run-on text management software integrated with search results on disk? Should numeric information be released in specific spreadsheet formats?

Search operations should follow the Scriptural injunction to "grow in wisdom and grace." A little empire-building, fully incorporating real new value and solid performance, might not hurt either.

—BQ

need to contact them regularly to monitor new or recurring information needs? Is it time to start the search process all over again?

CONCLUSION: ONE FINAL NOTE

Searchers of the world! You are not alone. Somewhere out there is another searcher just like you who has suffered through torment and warbled with delight over the search process. When you get in trouble or you get ecstatically lucky, share the feeling. Cultivate your fellow searchers. They're a grand bunch.

Now, folks...

Why the hell are we all sitting around reading (and writing) articles? Get back online, you! LET'S SEARCH!!

REFERENCE


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