

In the news

Despite the popularity and supposed ease of use of the Web, we librarians still have our work cut out for us. As noted in a monthly electronic newsletter (*Search Engine Report*, March 5, 2001, No. 52, Part 2), a two-year study by Alexa Research has revealed that based on their searching habits, "an alarming number of Web users are not particularly efficient at reaching their online destinations."

While this may be no great surprise, "This study shows that for many, there's a conceptual misunderstanding of how to effectively navigate the Web," said Matthew Work, vice president of Alexa Research. "Some people think that their homepage is the Web, that they have to go through their homepage in order to get to the site they want, without realizing that any Web site can be accessed directly."

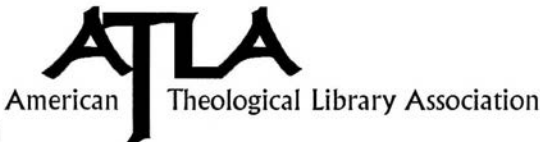
The study also revealed that a large number of people got to desired Web sites by entering site names as search terms instead of just typing the URLs in the address field of their browser.

After "sex" (the number one search term identified in the study), four of the top 10 search terms entered by users in the study were Web site names or addresses. "Hotmail" (and its URL variations) took second place, "Yahoo" (and its URL variations) took third place, while EBay and AOL were ninth and tenth, respectively.

The data from this study seem like a good introduction to the publication of ACRL's new "Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction" (page 416). An information literate student should be able to "construct and implement effectively designed search strategies" (page 421).

I hope you will find these updated objectives useful as you keep educating your users about the best ways to find and evaluate information.

— Mary Ellen K. Davis
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