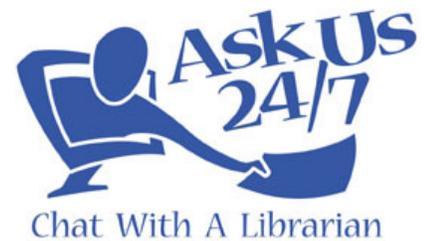


# Search Techniques for VR



## The Google Trap

"In all of the transcripts I've reviewed, patrons generally are not satisfied with a referral to Google."

— Wren Spengler, QuestionPoint Quality Control

It's tempting to take a few words from the patron's question, type them into Google, and just push the first result to them. But this isn't always the best solution. Why?

The patron most likely has already done it!

These days, almost everyone knows about Google, and unless your patron just started using the internet today for the first time, they most likely already know how to perform a simple Google search and look at the first result. They are coming to us, the librarians, because they haven't found the info they needed on their own. Try using the following tips to improve your search strategies, to help you find something better than the patron could have done on their own.

## Use Wikipedia's links/references

Wikipedia isn't always an ideal source. Not because it has bad information, but as with Google, almost everyone knows about it, and the patron probably already uses it. Also, many teachers and college professors do not allow it to be used as a source. But it can be a good starting point, because often at the end of the article are references and links to "official" sources of info, and you can head to those links without needing to use the actual Wikipedia article. Below are notes and links found in Wikipedia's article on the Titanic:

### Notes

1. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> Staff (27 May 1911). "The Olympic and Titanic". *The Times* (London) (39596): 4.
2. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Beveridge, Bruce; Hall, Steve (2004). "Ismay's Titans". *Olympic & Titanic*. West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity. p. 1. ISBN 0741419491.
3. <sup>^</sup> Chirnside, Mark (2004). *The Olympic-Class Ships*. Stroud, England: Tempus. p. 43. ISBN 0752428683.
4. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> <sup>e</sup> Richard Howells: *The Myth of the Titanic*, ISBN 0333725972
5. <sup>^</sup> Moss, Michael S (2004). "William James Pirrie". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
6. <sup>^</sup> Bullock, Shan F. (1912). *Thomas Andrews, Shipbuilder*. Dublin: Maunsel and Co.
7. <sup>^</sup> Jenkins, Stanley C. (1926-03-06). "Alexander Carlisle ". *The Times*. Retrieved on 2008-11-08.
8. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "Testimony of Alexander Carlisle" . *British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry*. 1912-07-30. Retrieved on 2008-11-08.

### External links

- *BBC Archive: Titanic* , Hear the survivors describe a night they could never forget.
- *Titanic Historical Society*
- *Encyclopedia Titanica* , an invaluable source of information concerning the sinking of the *Titanic*.
- *RMS Titanic, Inc*  Corporate information and the official *Titanic* archive.
- *Titanic Inquiry Project*  Complete transcripts of both the US Senate and British Board of Trade inquiries into the disaster, along with their final reports.

## Who has the info?

Sometimes it can be helpful to think of who is the most knowledgeable source on the topic in question. For example, someone wants general information about Dalmatians. What agency/organization/person would be likely to be an authority on this topic? Maybe the American Kennel Club:

A screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "american kennel club dalmatians". To the right of the search bar are buttons for "Search", "Advanced Search", and "Preferences". Below the search bar, the results are displayed under the heading "Web Show options...". The first result is "American Kennel Club - Dalmatian" with a link icon. The snippet reads: "If you are considering purchasing a Dalmatian puppy, learn more here. Non-Sporting Group; AKC recognized in 1888. Ranging in size from 19 to 23 inches tall ...". Below the snippet is the URL "www.akc.org/breeds/dalmatian/index.cfm" and additional information: "46k - Cached - Similar pages". To the right of the main results is a "Sponsored Links" section with a link to "American Kennel Club" and the text "Leading the world in dog ownership & registration. Learn More Now! www.akc.org".

On the other hand, a simple Google search for “Dalmatian” didn’t even bring up the AKC anywhere on the first page of results:

A screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "dalmatians". To the right of the search bar are buttons for "Search", "Advanced Search", and "Preferences". Below the search bar, the results are displayed under the heading "Web Images". The first result is "Dalmatian Information and Pictures, Dalmatians, Fire Dog" with a link icon. The snippet reads: "All about the Dalmatian, info, pictures, breeders, rescues, care, temperament, health, puppies and much more." Below the snippet is the URL "www.dogbreedinfo.com/dalmatian.htm" and additional information: "45k - Cached - Similar pages". The second result is "Dalmatian - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" with a link icon. The snippet reads: "Feb 14, 2009 ... Dalmatian may refer to: Dalmatia, a region mainly in the southern part of modern Croatia; Dalmatians, Croatian inhabitants of Dalmatia ...". Below the snippet is the URL "en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatian" and additional information: "18k - Cached - Similar pages". The third result is "Dalmatian (dog) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" with a link icon. The snippet reads: "The Dalmatian (Croatian: Dalmatinac) is a breed of dog widely associated with Dalmatia, a historical region of Croatia although the exact origins remain ...". Below the snippet is the URL "en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatian\_(dog)" and additional information: "70k - Cached - Similar pages". The fourth result is "Dalmatians" with a link icon. The snippet reads: "Dalmatians are medium-sized, short coated dogs. The accepted size in the USA is between 19-24 inches at the shoulder. Weight ranges from 40-70 pounds. ...". Below the snippet is the URL "www.k9web.com/dog-faqs/breeds/dalmatians.html" and additional information: "45k - Cached - Similar pages". To the right of the main results is a "Sponsored Links" section with several links: "Dalmatian Guide" (Learn About Housebreaking, Training Barking, Biting, Grooming & Diet. Dalmatian.TrainPetDog.com), "Dalmatian Guide" (How To Make Your Dalmatian Happy, Healthy & Obedient! DalmatianSawry.com), "Share Dalmatian Photos" (on DoggySnaps.com. Free Photo Sharing and Forums for Dog Lovers www.doggysnaps.com), and "Puppies For Sale" (Find the perfect puppy online 1,000s of profiles with photos).

Or, if you already know that a particular site has the info you want, you can search just that domain name in Google. Just use the word “site” followed by a colon, and then the domain (no spaces):

dalmatians site:akc.org

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

You could use this technique to find information about another library that isn't in the policy page. For example, if a patron at the Mid-York library system asks if fax machines are available, but the policy page doesn't say, try this search:

This technique can be used for top-level domains as well. If you think that a certain topic would have better information on college/university websites, for example, you could limit your search to anything ending in .edu:

### The Jeopardy Technique: Start with the answer, not the question.

Don't search for a question. Search in the way you think the answer will be written. If someone asks "How many Oscars has Meryl Streep won?" don't do this:

True, putting it in quotation marks will insert the entire phrase, assuming the phrase as you wrote it appears on any websites. But it's not the best way to go about it. Instead, do this:

The asterisk acts as a wild card, where any word can appear. This improves your chances of finding the answer, which is much more likely to appear on a webpage in the form of an answer, rather than a question.

["Self-Gratification" - 5 Sure Bets For Tonight's Oscars | The ...](#)  

\*Correction\* **Meryl Streep has won two Oscars** its just that she's been nominated the most times (Kate Winslet's probably going to break that ...  
[smokingsection.uproxx.com/TSS/2009/02/5-sure-bets-for-tonights-oscars - 65k -](#)  
[Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - 

[20 Oscar Facts - Sky Movies](#)  

Feb 20, 2009 ... **Meryl Streep has won two Oscars** - Best Actress for Sophie's Choice and Best Supporting Actress for Kramer Vs. Kramer. ...  
[movies.sky.com/20-oscar-facts - 35k -](#) [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - 

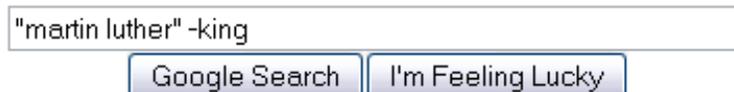
## Keep Ready-Reference Bookmarks for Information at Your Fingertips

See the “Reference Sources for VR” guide.

### More Google Tips

Search for words as a phrase by surrounding them with quotation marks.

You can search for pages without a particular word by putting a minus sign in front of it. For example, if a search for “Martin Luther” is bringing up too many results about Martin Luther King, try this instead, which will eliminate any results containing the word “king”:



### Consider Other Search Engines

Google is the first-choice search engine for many librarians and patrons. But if it's not turning up the results you want, consider some of these others:

The big ones:

- Yahoo! – <http://www.yahoo.com>
- Bing - <http://www.bing.com>
- Ask – <http://www.ask.com>

Lesser-known:

- Hakia - <http://hakia.com/> - This search engine is still in Beta, but it has an option to filter results to show “credible sites” (recommended by librarians) only.
- Exalead - <http://www.exalead.com/search> - allows you to truncate searches by using an asterisk. (eg, a search for manag\* will return results for managing, management, manager, etc.)
- Top 10 Alternative Search Engines of 2008 - [http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/top\\_10\\_alternative\\_search\\_engi.php](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/top_10_alternative_search_engi.php)
- Infomine - <http://infomine.ucr.edu/> - returns results from scholarly sources