

## Using Search Engines

Search Engines review all public sources of information that they know on the Web

No one search engine (not even Google) indexes all the web

Information in private databases will not show up in a search engine

## How Search Engines Work

SE send out “spiders” or “robots” to read the contents of webpages

Spiders send back contents of page to the SE servers/home office

All links on a page get a new spider sent to them for indexing

## How Search Engines Work

When you request a search, the SE scans all pages sent back by the spiders for your term

Any use anywhere in the page counts as a match and will be listed

That’s why there’s so many matches, but so few are actually what you are looking for

## Using Search Engines

SE assigns a weight to each page depending on where and how your term is used on the page

Algorithms determine how weights work

Academic research NEEDS a search engine whose algorithm emphasizes academic credibility, not popularity

## Using Search Engines

Regular, general public search engines like Yahoo or Bing! are **NOT** credible for academic research

They, like public library, are meant for casual or K-12 research, not academic

## Using Search Engines

Google was created by graduate students because other search engines didn’t get good enough results

Alltheweb.com gives an international view

Google Scholar focuses on academic sources but doesn’t always have full-text – only shows what’s available for free

## Using Search Engines

How you phrase your search term matters

Obesity finds ANY page with those words  
ANYWHERE – 29,800,000

Use Obesity epidemic – more focused  
search – 959,000

## Using Search Engines

Put phrases inside quotations – SE only  
lists pages with those words in that order

Obesity epidemic – 959,000

“Obesity epidemic” – 880,000

## Using Search Engines

More terms = better, more focused results

Obesity epidemic – 959,000

Obesity epidemic corn syrup – 29,600

Obesity epidemic diabetes corn syrup –  
19,800

## Using Search Engines

Put a – before terms that you want ignored  
in the results

Death penalty “cruel and unusual” = 223,000

Death penalty “cruel and unusual” –torture  
= 176,000