

MLIS 7110 Online Searching

Valdosta State University

Fall 2003

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Course Description

A Web-hybrid course.

One major component of librarianship and information science is concerned with information retrieval. The discipline is further specialized in its concern with information retrieval from databases. This course addresses the *general* approaches and techniques used for the searching and retrieval of information from commercial and Web-based information resources.

We will for purposes of this course use two commercial database interfaces: Dialog and Lexis-Nexis. We will also address ourselves to the use of a number of Web search and metasearch engines.

Students will be provided with individual passwords for the two search services.

Rationale

There are any number of general and specialized commercial database interfaces available in the market place. These range from Dialog and Lexis-Nexis, of course, to Ovid, Thomas, STN, Edgar, Seagus, and so on. Some provide access to a single specialized database, others to many.

I choose to expose you to database searching with two because Dialog and Lexis-Nexis offer great instructional support. But as we shall see they also have very different search philosophies. You the searcher must learn a “mindset” to effectively use them effectively.

Web search engines are a whole different issue. Building precision in a web search is difficult. But Web engines can be used to effect.

Textbooks

Ricardo Baeza-Yates and Berthier Ribeiro-Neto, *Modern Information Retrieval*, Addison, Wesley, Longman (<http://www.awl.com/>)

Peter Morville, Louis Rosenfeld, and Joseph Janes *The Internet Searcher's Handbook: Locating Information, People, and Software*, Second Edition. Neal-Schulman

Because our students are scattered throughout the Georgia, it is perhaps most efficient to acquire the assigned text books from online book vendors, from the publishers directly, or from your local bookstores. I have not placed book orders with the VSU Bookstore.

Approach

The course will be divided into quarters.

First quarter: Theory

Boolean, Stemming, Nesting, Full text, Thesaurus, and other applications

Second quarter: Dialog

What is Dialog, Basic Dialog search algorithms. Dialog databases, simple Dialog searches, constructing complex Dialog searches.

Third Quarter: Lexis-Nexis

What is Lexis-Nexis. Basic Lexis-Nexis search algorithms. Simple Lexis-Nexis searches constructing complex L-N searches.

Fourth Quarter: Web. Understanding Web quality or its lack. Evolution and change in Web search. How to keep up with what search engine and metasearch engine does what.

There will be three Sunday lab sessions in Macon. These sessions are scheduled at the beginning of the Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, and Web blocks of instruction to familiarize the student with the use of each of the systems.

Assignments and Grading

This is primarily a “skills” class. Students will be asked to demonstrate that they can perform a set of information retrieval exercises efficiently. Therefore they will be asked to demonstrate that they can apply the theoretical material learned in the first part in the next three.

Students will be provided with a set of queries after each of the Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, and Web blocks of instructions. Each of these sets will be worth one-third of the final grade. Each block will be designed to demonstrate information retrieval skills within that database retrieval interface system.

Individual assignment weights are provided above. Final grades will be assigned as follows:

A – 91-100

B – 81-90

C – 71-80

D – 60-70

F – 0-69