

Name: _____

Laboratory 3: Exploring the WEB

Goal:

Explore the tools for searching the World Wide Web for materials on a particular subject.

Objectives:

- Use several different search engines to retrieve information on a particular subject
- Compare the responses from the different search engines
- Determine the variations in search goal description used by the different engines

The World Wide Web is a collection of hundreds of thousands of individual items linked to other items and openly available to people who want them. The Web is growing at a tremendous rate. It is expected that most of the openly available information of the world will be accessible through the Web within 10 years. This does not mean the contents of every book, movie or recording. It does mean copies of public documents, catalogs, manuals, government publications and other open material. In addition, steps are being taken to publish many newspapers, magazines, and journals electronically. Some of these will be freely available; some will require an organization membership or a subscription for access. It is hard to imagine all the information resources that will be available on the Web. It is even harder to imagine how it will all be organized and how you will find what you really want or need from among all that neat stuff. Imagine a tremendous library that contains every book and magazine ever published and also has copies of films, audio recordings, and paintings. The problem is that the library has no index, no guide to what is where. How would you use such a resource? You could wander around and lose yourself in all the wonderful things there are to enjoy. However, you would be hard pressed to get something you need or a collection of materials on a particular topic.

This is the problem addressed by Search Engines, databases, and robot programs called spiders. The programs are called spiders because they crawl around the web and capture what they can find. Various spiders work in different ways and provide different kinds of information about web resources. They have one thing in common. Each spider does something like what you do when you go exploring on the Web. They look around at the various sites and see what is there. Then they make an index to what they have found. When a person is looking for something on the Web, the person can go exploring or can use the index created by one of the spiders. The indices created by the various spiders differ; the differences come from where the spiders crawl in their search of the web and in what information they choose to retain about what they find.

You will begin your experimentation with these search tools by connecting to:

WWW.BEAUCOUP.COM

This site contains a list of many different search engines, software repositories, employment information, and entertainment. You will start by searching for articles or

Return to the main menu of the Beaucoup Site and select software for Windows. This will list several sites that house software repositories you can look through and try out. Select the ZDNet entry and search for a **text editor** that you can download and try out. What editor did you select to tryout? Was it easy to download, install, and test out? What does it cost if you decide to keep it?

Using a Word Processor, write a two-paragraph description/explanation of your search experiences. Explain why different search engines return different results, in terms of number of hits and quality of hits. Attach your brief write up to this lab document and hand it back in with the lab sheet.