

## A Guide to... Helping Your Students Find Information Online

A large amount of information about engineering is available for students to find on the web, but it is well known that not all of this is reliable and that some "gems" may be hidden by the sheer quantity of other material. The resources listed in this guide aim either to highlight the high quality material or provide your students with the skills they require to appraise the information they find themselves\*. Promoting the use of these types of service will not only allow your students to access information that they may use directly for coursework, revision, and projects, but will also equip them with the skills they will need to continue to find their own resources once they leave higher education.

### Intute Engineering Gateway

<http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/engineering/>



Intute is a JISC funded service providing a catalogue of selected web resources for education and research. All material in the catalogue is evaluated and categorized by subject specialists based at UK universities for staff and students in UK Further and Higher Education. The Engineering Gateway allows one to browse the catalogue by engineering subject, to search the descriptions of websites within any subject classification and, if a search of the information in the catalogue does not provide enough information, one can search the full text of the websites listed in the catalogue.

### TechXtra <http://www.techxtra.ac.uk/>



This is a free service that cross searches 31 different collections of resources relevant to engineering, mathematics and computing, which can help you find articles, books, websites listed in Intute, industry news, job announcements, technical data, research outputs and learning resources.

### Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/>



Google Scholar provides a search of scholarly literature across many disciplines and sources, including peer reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles. The difference between Scholar and the regular Google search is that for Scholar only selected sources are included (e.g. academic publishers, professional and learned societies and preprint repositories), and that the page ranking takes into account such factors as number of citations, the prominence of the journal, and the authors' other output as well as those used for other types of document on the web.

### Google Custom Search Engine <http://google.com/coop/cse/>



The Google custom search engine allows an individual or group to create a search form that will perform a full text search using the Google search engine but limited to sites which they choose. This search form, and the results page, can be embedded in any website. The advantage over using the full Google search is in limiting searches to sites which are known to be relevant and reliable. For example, a search on the [www.RealClimate.org](http://www.RealClimate.org) website is limited to selected scientific sources. Setting up a custom search engine is relatively simple, so there is scope here for creating (or encouraging students to create) search engines related to specific courses.

---

\* A complementary *Guide to online resources for learning and teaching* provides information for tutors and includes specific sources of high quality information for learning and teaching.

## Del.icio.us <http://del.icio.us/>



Del.icio.us is a *social bookmarking* site, where individuals and groups of people can save the URLs of their favourite websites on de.icio.us, along with a brief description, allowing them to access these bookmarks via the web and share them with others. So, for example, a del.icio.us account could be set up for a course and staff and students on that course could share information about relevant websites via that course account. Sites that are bookmarked can be *tagged* with short labels to assist in bringing together resources with something in common. As well as allowing discovery of sites which are frequently tagged with terms relevant to an engineering subject, a tag can be agreed for resources relevant to a specific course or module (e.g. hwhh3v2006). Plugins and XML feeds allow selected bookmarks to be displayed as menus in the student's browser or as resource lists in the course VLE.

## Internet detective <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective/>



Internet Detective is a free online tutorial created as part of Intute and the LearnHigher CETL, that aims to help students (or staff, or researchers) develop their Internet research skills. The tutorial takes its form from the film noir detective genre, and looks at the critical thinking required when using the Internet for research and offers practical advice on evaluating the quality of websites. It takes about an hour to complete and covers: why students should develop advanced Internet skills for University or College work; why information quality is an issue on the web; hints and tips to help students evaluate information they find on the web; practical exercises; and the dangers of plagiarism and how to avoid them.

## Intute Virtual Training Suite <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/>

The Virtual Training Suite is a set of online tutorials which aim to help students (as well as lecturers and researchers) improve their Internet information skills. The same basic format has been used to provide tutorials which are tailored for students of various subjects, so that examples are always relevant to the subject in question. Each guide includes a tour of key internet sites and sections aimed at:

- improving students Internet search and browsing skills,
- encouraging them to evaluate critically the resources they find,
- offering ideas and examples of how to use these skills in their studies.

Engineering subjects which are currently covered are: aviation, civil, construction, electrical, health and safety, materials, general & automotive, mechanical, and petroleum & off-shore.

## Last, but not least

Finally, we hope that this guide will be useful. It is not intended to be comprehensive: not every available resource has been included and some information about the resources (e.g. whether you have access to them) will vary depending on your institution. Don't forget to **consult your library** for advice on other resources which are more tailored to your needs and to find out about institutional subscriptions to databases and journals.

Phil Barker, Engineering Subject Centre  
Version 2, June 2007  
© Engineering Subject Centre 2007

Further copies can be downloaded from the Engineering Subject Centre website