

Maps and Directions: Infospace.com.

Access: <http://in-137.infospace.com/info/kevmmap/mapdir.htm?actnav=org>.

Infospace.com is a comprehensive source of directory information. Its focus is on "content with broad appeal, such as yellow pages, and white pages, maps, classified advertisements, real-time stock quotes, information on local businesses and events, weather forecasts and horoscopes." While Infospace.com is not unique in providing access to this kind of content, it does a good job of efficiently connecting the user with news, e-shopping, entertainment, and the focus of this review: maps and directions.

While there are many sites that provide access to maps and directions between two addresses, including MapBlast.com, Delorme.com and MapQuest.com, Infospace.com is my first choice when I need maps or directions. Users can access U.S., Canadian, and international maps, driving directions, and route maps. The driving directions are the most useful aspect. Users enter the starting and destination addresses and the database, powered by Vicinity.com, generates step-by-step directions that include total distance and estimated travel time. Once the step-by-step directions are available, users can also access return directions, new directions, and a route map. Additionally, the search results in region-specific links, including city guides, classified advertisements, and weather information.

In comparison to other map sites, Infospace.com is not graphics-heavy and, as a result, downloads results quickly. Most users, regardless of Internet-connection speed, should find Infospace.com to be fairly speedy. However, there are some aspects of Infospace.com that could be improved. The maps and directions are in the yellow pages, but the small font makes it difficult to immediately locate the link. Also, although Infospace.com says that its "directions engine" requires that the starting and destination points be in the same

U.S. region or metro area, I was able to perform a search between Maine and Montana. That is certainly not the same region, but the results seemed accurate. However, a subsequent long-distance search did not produce successful results.

Overall, the maps and directions section of Infospace.com is a good one. It is a logical and efficient resource for anyone who runs the risk of being asked, "How do I get there from here?"—*Jennifer K. Snow, Bowdoin College, jsnow@bowdoin.edu*



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Human Rights Library

Meta Search Engine for Searching Multiple Human Rights Sites.

Access: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/lawform.html>.

As the Web's growth rate continues to spiral upwards, researchers are in greater need of tools to help them retrieve relevant information. The Meta Search Engine for Searching Multiple Human Rights Sites is one such tool. It is newly offered by the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library (<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts>), a longstanding resource in the field of human rights, designed by Innovamed Technologies.

The meta search engine allows users to search 18 different human rights sites simultaneously or, conversely, to search one or more sites selectively. Currently, the lineup of sites available for searching includes a diverse grouping of human rights organizations—United Nations bodies, intergovernmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and governments.

Using a specialized meta search engine is advantageous for a number of reasons: searching several sites at once saves time; one standard search interface is used; results tend to be relevant, as only human rights sites are searched; and comprehensive searches are easier to conduct.

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These strengths are particularly important for researchers, activists, and librarians who want to identify multiple reports that document the human rights conditions in a given country or that discuss specific groups targeted for human rights violations.

The trade-off for convenience and ease of use is that meta search engines do not exploit either the unique functionality of individual search engines or the “invisible” databases offered on many sites.

Two examples: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees search engine allows visitors to conduct searches within particular sections of its Web site—UNHCR documents, legal documents, etc., or search them all—while the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada produces several FolioViews country information databases and makes them available for searching on its site. To use these features, a searcher must link to a site and launch a query from the original source. Knowing more about the scope of what the meta search engine actually searches would be welcome.

The site offers general instructions for formulating searches and acceptable search syntax. Most of the individual search engines support truncation, Boolean, and proximity operators. Links to selected search tip pages are also provided to highlight additional features. Search results are returned sequentially, with a maximum of 50 responses for some search engines. Hits are presented on one page and organized by source to allow the user to better evaluate the effectiveness of a search on an engine-by-engine basis.

Increasingly, more specialized tools like the human rights meta search engine are dotting the Web landscape—for good reason. Information overload is too common an ailment. Any methods we can adopt to improve the precision and relevance of our searches will greatly enhance the research process.—*Elisa Mason, Independent Information Specialist, elisamason@ibm.net*

Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

Access: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu>.

A real gem for archivists and others who love to delve into the past, this site can take up simply hours of your time: plan accordingly. The catalog of the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library at Duke,

it also includes some full-text collections, which have been digitized.

The layout is simple and somewhat linear. Much is contained here, and it is all relatively easy to find. Usually one or two clicks will get to a selected area. Thank you, designers! Frames are actually useful instead of being intrusive, and serve as a Table of Contents for each section. Navigation is simple and direct, making it score high on the “ease of use” scale. The Recent Additions section offers a quick update of new materials for regular users.



One of the new collections, which figures prominently at the top of the homepage, is Historic American Sheet Music, which “provides access to digital images of 3,042 pieces from the collection, published in the United States between 1850 and 1920.” The collection is browsable by subject, illustration, advertising, date, and title. It is also searchable by more than 20 fields, including all the browsable ones and some pleasant surprises—engraver, lithographer, arranger, dedicatee, first line, refrain, series, lyricist, LCSH, composer, etc. Some cataloger went simply wild and had his or her way with this collection. Good news for us!

Currency is not so much an issue for an archive site, and is addressed by the “Recent Additions” section. Since this is a historic collection, currency refers to the rate at which data is digitized and added. I could find no indication of future plans for digitizing specific other pieces of the collection. The “last updated” date listed was November 17, 1997.

Most of the materials available in the library are still on paper and reside there. Notable digitized collections are “Civil War Women,” a collection of diaries, papers, and letters, and “The Urban Landscape,” over 1,000 images pertaining to this theme. Many pieces of the collection deal with regional interests or topics, but may find an audience anywhere.

All in all, this is an excellent site, for both content and design. In fact, it could be a model for others. Giving the user less clutter and more access points can only make us, in the words of Emeril Lagasse, “Happy happy.”—*Lisa K. Miller, Paradise Valley Community College Library, miller@pvc.maricopa.edu* ■

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