

Textual Circulation, or “Where’d that Text Go Next?”

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The purpose of this short session is to familiarize you with different tools and techniques that will allow you to trace where publicly accessible web texts travel around on the net. Why might this be important you might ask? Well, for a couple of reasons:

- Finding out where a text circulates will help you know how influential that text was on other writers and readers.
- Finding out where a text circulates will help you trace the conversations in which a particular text is participating.
- Finding out where a text circulates will help you understand the reception of a text by audiences from across the web.

We'll be using Boolean search terms in this activity. Before we begin, let's have a look at the anatomy of a URL. Go to “2.”

Let's pretend your researching the famous Facebook.com post by Mark Zuckerberg concerning privacy. It is located here:
<http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=391922327130>

To see where this post was linked to on the internet use the “**link:**” search operator on google:



link:<http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=391922327130>

About 162 results (0.14 seconds)

Great! 162 results. By visiting some of the places where this article was linked you can begin to map out the conversations that this article generated, who was engaged in those conversations, and when they were being held. You can also trace how this article was used by other authors in their own arguments.

Tracking where scholarly texts circulate is a different process; however, it is just as easy! Let's say the article you want to investigate has the following citation:

Trimbur, John. “English Only and US College Composition.” CCC 53 4 (2002): pp. 594-630.

To see how this text circulates in academic conversations we can use GoogleScholar. At scholar.google.com enter the citation for your article. If you don't have the entire citation you can use the author's name and article title.

[English only and US college composition](#)

..., J Trimbur - [College Composition and Communication](#), 2002 - JSTOR

The fact that US writing instruction is conducted in English seems commonsensical. After all, though English is not the official language of the US, this is an English-speaking nation. As everyone from politicians and educational policymakers to non-English speaking immigrants ...

[Cited by 37](#) - [Related articles](#) - [BL Direct](#) - [All 8 versions](#)

The “**Cited by**” link at the bottom of my article listing tells me where else this article has been cited. The “**Related Articles**” provides me with other articles that are similar in argument, publication venue, and subject area. By using GoogleScholar you can trace where your article is cited, by whom, and for what purpose.

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All Web addresses have at least these 2 elements

Publicly accessible webtexts are usually arranged using this URL structure. For example, John Perry Barlow's famous article “The Economy of Ideas” is located here:

<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.03/economy.ideas.html>

The **red** text is the domain. The **green** text is the directory and the **blue** text is the filename or article.

Why is this important? Because we can tell Google to find information by directing it to search domains for specific content. Let me show you what I mean.

Let's say you want to find out where a particular web text was used at a particular domain. So, in this case, let's see how the Zuckerberg article was used on PBS.org.

To see where the Zuckerberg post was linked on PBS.org we'll combine the “**link:**” operator with the “**site:**” operator.



site:pbs.org **link:**<http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=391922327130>

3 results (0.14 seconds)

In this example the “**site:**” search operator defines the domain (see #2) that you wish to search. The “**link:**” search operator is the web text you want to trace. In this example, Google returned 3 instances of the Zuckerberg post on PBS.org. This is a great way to focus your research by investigating how particular sources (PBS, CNN, BBC, etc.) use texts in their reporting. You can also use this technique to trace texts on social networking sites.

GoogleScholar and Google can be customized by using the “Advanced Search” options. The search limiters that discussed in part two of this workshop (e.g., “and/or”, geographic locations, and date ranges) can help you refine your searches for more specific purposes. GoogleScholar's advanced search functions allow for author and publication specification as well as subject area focus (e.g., “Biology” or “Economics”).

For more resources consult:

1. Using Google's Search Operators:

(http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators.html)

This website details how to search using all of Google's Boolean search operators.

2. Using GoogleScholar Advanced:

(<http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/refinerearch.html>)

This website details the functions of GoogleScholar's “Advanced Search” functions.

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