CMSC 601:
Increasing Research Visibility on the Web

Building a presence on the Web for you and your research

Overview

• Motivation
• Things to do
• Meta things to do
• Things not to do
• Conclusion

Overview

Shameless self promotion

• Part of your job as a researcher is to promote yourself and your work
  — This applies equally well to startups
  — It extends to promoting your university, company, department, colleagues, students, etc.
• We assume you are doing good work, publishing papers, giving talks, networking, etc.
• Your goal is to help people interested in your and research area and topics to find your good works and take a look at them.
• So it need not be shameless
The Sum of Human Knowledge, 1907

WHEN IN DOUBT—“LOOK IT UP” IN
The Encyclopaedia Britannica
The Sum of Human Knowledge
29 volumes, 28,150 pages, 44,000,000 words of text.
Printed on thin, but strong opaque India paper, each
volume but one inch in thickness.

The Sum of Human Knowledge, 2011

I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions. I will use Google before asking dumb questions.

This is a big change!

• It would have been hard in 1987 to contribute to the Encyclopedia Britannica
  — Don’t call us, we’ll call you.
  — World recognized experts, only, thank you
• By 2000, any idiot can put stuff on the Web
• Having an impact requires
  — Getting it noticed
  — Having it matter by being good, relevant, timely, etc
• You have control over these

Goal: Have a Presence on the Web

• Have a set of web pages; keep them current
• Put your papers and presentations online
• Have a blog and post frequently
• Make demos, programs, data & code available
• Create and maintain unique and valuable resources (e.g. annotated bibliography, a “how to” guide for a useful software system)
• Contribute to online mailing lists, newsgroups, ...
• Contribute to Wikipedia (you are an expert in some things)
Goal: Have a Presence on the Web
Meta things to do:
• Work on this every week or month
• Optimize your online presence for search engines
• Develop a brand
• Keep up with the technology and trends

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Your Web pages
• You must have Web pages providing access to essential information
  – Contact information
  – Basic biosketch
  – Links to CV or resume, papers, blog, software, demos, public calendar, photo sharing site, etc.
• You can have lots more, of course
• Your home page URL denotes you
  – Put it on your business card and in your email sig
• A long-lived, short URL is best

The URLs help people find out about you. If your email message is sent to a newsgroup or mailing list that has a Web archive, these links will also add to your PageRank!
More on your Web pages

- Where to host them
  - You might want to have your own domain
  - Registering one costs ~$10/year
  - Your site can be hosted by Google or a full hosting service (~$50/year?)

- Who’s accessing your pages? How did they get there?
  - There are lots of free analytics services
  - Google analytics is one, sitemeter is another
  - They all work the same: add a link or some Javascript code to your web pages, see the summary statistics on the web

Dr. Perich has his own domain, giving it persistence and making it more useful as an identifier.
Put your papers online

“Articles freely available online are more highly cited. For greater impact and faster scientific progress, authors and publishers should aim to make research easy to access.”


–http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu/online-nature01/
DBLP indexes > 1M CS articles from good quality journals and conferences. You might prefer to publish in a conference or journal it indexes.

This graph shows the distribution of the percentage increase for the average number of citations to online articles compared to offline articles.

Put your papers online

- Choose your title carefully
- Help people know how to cite your paper
  - Put preferred citation on overview page or on 1st first page of your online version. (Use Acrobat)
- Mark drafts and preprints appropriately
- Copyright issues
  - Fair use of preprints
- Make sure they get into CiteSeer, Google Scholar, etc.
  - You can wait for the crawlers or push
- DBLP gets data from the publishers of journals and conferences. Run a workshop? – submit the proceedings.

This graph shows the probability that an article is freely available online as a function of citations and year. More highly cited articles, and more recent articles, are significantly more likely to be online.
The presentation page will be indexed with terms in the page title and abstract. Choose them well. We initially choose a bad title for this presentation.

Develop a blog

- Having a “professional” blog is a good idea
- Use it as a diary for your professional life
  - Short entries on new ideas
  - Links to relevant work, tools, companies
  - Your impressions of conferences, papers, techniques, tools
- Writing helps you develop ideas and a blog is a place to put your initial half-baked thoughts
- Who knows, you may develop a readership
- Starting one is trivially easy, e.g., at blogspot.com or wordpress.com
- You might post to several – e.g., also posting to a group blog for your lab
- There are tricks to getting your blog and posts noticed

According to Andrew Tomkins (Yahoo Research) 70-75% of all new web content is coming from social media. (03/2007)

http://www.boston.com/business/globe/articles/2006/04/16/blogs_essential_to_a_good_career/
Use Facebook and Twitter, too

- You can certainly use Facebook and Twitter to promote your research too
- At least be careful what you do put on such social media sites
- If you want to keep your Facebook personal, set the privacy constraints appropriately
- You can always start a Facebook page for your research
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Search engines

• It’s all about PageRank
  – PageRank is like water: it’s essential and flows in and out of pages
  – Having a site with a high PageRank (>6) is worth money!
• SEO: Search Engine Optimization
  – There are acceptable and unacceptable ways to raise your pagerank
  – Start today and take advantage of “preferential attachment”

SEO things to do

• Search engines weigh terms in title and anchors highly
  – Choose your web page titles carefully
  – Choose your anchor text for links carefully
  – Promote your brand terms (e.g., UMBC, ebiquity)
• Examples
  – I’m part of the the <a href="…">UMBC ebiquity research group</a>
• Link to your pages often. Use rel="nofollow" to plug PageRank leaks

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The seven deadly sins

- Email link or blog spam
- Overly mixing personal and professional interests
- Foolish words
- Imprudence
- Crap
- Bullshit
- Egregious copyright violations

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Conclusion

- Promoting your work today requires effective use of the Internet and Web
- It’s not rocket science, but it requires learning how and keeping up as things change
  - Your content should be fresh
  - Web best practices change every few years
- The effort is worth it
- You can choose a style that fits your values and personality
  - from modest and understated to flashy and flamboyant
- It’s kind of fun, too