

Learning from information sources

As more web-based information sources become available for research, greater emphasis needs to be placed on teaching pupils appropriate ways of accessing them. It is not sufficient to teach the mechanics of activating a search engine and obtaining lists of hits. Pupils should be aware of the advantages of browsing initially in conventional materials for basic information before deciding what exactly they want from a web search. The terms to be used for searching need to be discussed. Pupils should be shown how different search engines and combinations of search strings can yield different relevant hits; how to detect from the address of a hit the nature of the source; and how the presentation and interpretation of information provided depend on the author. Facilities available in different search engines should also be discussed, including options available for speeding up the time to download material. Above all, pupils should be helped to select material with some sensitivity to its intended use and audience, and trained in the disciplined and ethical use of a correct extract, including regular acknowledgement of its author and date of origin.