Book Review
Beyond the Search Engine: Design of the Online Search Experience

Liese Zahabi

First published 2025
by Routledge
ISBN: 978-1-032-48195-1 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-48194-4 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-38781-7 (ebk)
DOI: 10.4324/9781003387817
© 2025 Liese Zahabi

Most digital platforms and tools feature a search capability, represented by a simplified magnifying glass icon so familiar that many users overlook its meaning; they understand its purpose. The search functions across various interfaces are uniform and expected. A blank text field for entering a query produces suggestions for different queries, ultimately leading to a page filled with structured search results. The author viewed that over the following 15 years, online search has changed in some astounding and disappointing) ways.

Concerns about privacy and security present a paradox for Internet users today. The news frequently highlights significant security breaches, while incidents of ransomware and malware exploiting vulnerabilities in smart devices have become increasingly widespread. This work covers the search design's informational, functional, and aesthetic aspects. The first chapter traced the WWW, Web search, and web content history.

In the second chapter, "The Rise of Task—and Domain-Specific Search," the author first explains professional databases and how the search interface is designed in them. Then, generic and domain-specific databases and their search interfaces are widely discussed to gain an understanding of them. This includes location-based and media-specific databases. The interfaces discussed are illustrated with search screenshots.

In the next chapter, "How Social Media Has Influenced Online Search," the author explains how social media has changed the landscape of the Internet and online search in several essential ways. She briefly traced social media history and further explained the features of several media, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, and TikTok, with data about their influence on society. The search procedures of social media are widely addressed further in this unit.
The chapter "The Need for Curation Interfaces" examines how individuals interact with the information they find on the Internet, the methods they use to understand it, and the strategies they implement to organize it. It describes the curation process and interfaces with illustrations.

Ubiquitous computing is a broad idea that relates to numerous other areas within interaction design and computing, which will be detailed individually in the following sections, which the author views in the next chapter. How the Internet of Things, Virtual and Augmented Reality and Voice user interfaces impact the search design are interestingly discussed in this chapter.

In the last chapter on Conclusion, there is a significant discussion on Searching Possibilities and Uncertain Futures, where there are issues of how AI and ML are obtrusive in the Internet. Generative AI is set to transform how people perform certain tasks, and it will enable new forms of technology

and human capabilities. The author's final inference is that the future lies in *Technofutures.*

The takeaways specified by the author in this book are

The evolution of the Internet and online search has not followed a single, linear path;

Search is always contextual, and human-centred search tools will give users clear options to filter and shape their searches;

Social media platforms have transformed the Internet and search, helping millions of people connect and collaborate in exciting ways, but designers must find a balance between assisting users to view the content they want and creating "addictive" platforms that seek engagement at any cost;

Providing many intuitive tools for curating and organizing searches helps users make sense of information and Cutting-edge technologies are changing how we search and our search experiences (but not always for the better).

Each chapter at the end has a bibliography of significant sources, and this book serves as an ideal platform for understanding the search process online. This reading enables the students and early learners of the web platform appropriately.

Hathairat Ketmaneechairat
King Mongkut's University of Technology
North Bangkok
Thailand