Going Beyond Google Again: Strategies for Using and Teaching the Invisible Web

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Book Review

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This volume follows up on the authors' 2009 book, *Going Beyond Google: The Invisible Web in Learning and Teaching* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2009). It is a welcome addition, given the rapid pace at which information technology is transforming higher education. "Invisible Web" is the term for the huge amount of Internet information that is not accessible via Google, Bing, Yahoo, and so forth. It includes proprietary databases, institutional collections, corporate and government data banks, privately secured web sites, and increasingly, social media. Of the trillions of webpages in the World Wide Web, Google only comprehends perhaps 10 percent. The rest is "invisible" to search engines.

Devine and Egger-Sider present a picture in which: (1) print reference materials are tacitly deemed obsolete, (2) most students in U.S. higher education have institutional access to high quality digital research materials, but (3) they are often unaware of these resources or make little use of them. A major OCLC study in 2010, for example, found "a decline in use of library Web sites, electronic journals, and online databases since 2005," a trend that has not yet reversed (31). The authors' analysis of dozens of studies on student research identifies three major traits: "over-reliance on Google and other major search engines, a tendency to favor time over content, and an overwhelming preference for convenience" (38).

The over-reliance on Google is especially troubling because of the rapid growth in automatically "personalized" searches, often unbeknownst to the user. Search engines filter the results of searches based on users' previous queries. Over time, the search utility constructs dense profiles of users' interests, generating results that are most likely to be "preferred." This works well for advertising, but it is disastrous for critical inquiry.

Personalized searches are liable simply to reinforce researchers' biases.

Devine and Egger-Sider make a strong case for teaching students about the Invisible Web, beginning as early as high school. They include a chapter describing approaches for introducing students to the Invisible Web, including a two-stage sample curriculum: (1) Web-Searching Basics, and (2) Presenting the Invisible Web, plus advice about teaching the Invisible Web with graphics and social media. The final sections of the book provide a working orientation to the Invisible Web, numerous examples of good resources, and some thoughts about the future of the Invisible Web.

This book is valuable in its own right as a reference work and resource guide. Every chapter comes with extensive reference lists; there is also a collection of selected additional readings. Chapter 6, "Looking Inside the Invisible Web: A Sampler," sets out the web addresses and some commentary for a basic research tool kit, recommended tools for specialized research, and an illustrative list of resources for highly advanced research.

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