

Finding people – when you have a name

People finders

Most media organisations have subscriptions to people finders. These are databases which combine an electoral roll and directory enquiries, but which usually include other bits of information too.

Probably the best known people finder used in the industry is [192.com](#), though [Cameo](#) and [Tracesmart](#) (they are all subscription). In addition to public directories, 192.com also offers Director reports – which can be useful for finding business connections between people. There are many other useful options otherwise.

But there are also some free (albeit less robust) alternatives out there. Try:

[123 people](#)

[Pipl](#)

[Yasni](#)

[Yoname](#)

Try using 192 and 123people to find **Terence Kealey**.

Search engine advanced operators

Search engine strategy: the theory

Although the proprietary systems we've looked at so far are probably the most useful, and most flexible for their purpose, there are some advanced functions you can and should be using to speed up your web search.

[Here](#) is a great little introduction to search theory, to get you started. These are the key issues:

Visualise the (hypothetical) information you want, in the words you would expect to find them on the page (or document).

If you have a question, try partially answering this question in the search terms you use, using phrase searching.

Facet analysis – an old school approach. Analyse your subject into different conceptual parts.

Once you've done this, choose your terms – use a thesaurus, and think around your subject – try to avoid words with multiple meanings, if possible. If that's not possible, try incorporating those terms as part of a phrase.

Search logic: advanced operators

- **AND:** (implicit)
- **OR:** *blair wmd OR weapons*
- **NOT:** *rangers -qpr*
- **Phrase search:** *which is the “richest bank in the UK”* (try with and without quotes)
- **Wildcard:** Google doesn't support the wildcard in the way it is conventionally used in other search engines – it uses automatic stemming. But try in MSN, Yahoo or Exalead.
Nevertheless, you can use a * in phrase-searching. Each * represents just one or more words. Google treats the * as a placeholder for a word or more than one word. For example, if you search for [oil * "new orleans"](#) you will see references to *oil spill*, *oil slick*, and *oil rig*.
- **+**: the plus sign allows you to stop Google from stemming your words – if you are interested in a word in a particular case. It can also be applied stop Google finding reference to certain words which link to (rather than feature in) the pages you are searching from, when viewing *cached* content. See results from [home secretary itinerary](#). Lastly, it can be applied to media sources, allowing you to search stories about that company in Google News. It's a bit rare to use such a thing – but compare the results of [waste BBC](#) and *waste +bbc* in Google News.
- **Synonyms:** *~environmental disaster* brings back references to environmental safety, eco-disaster etc..

It's worth bearing in mind that other engines offer an even broader range of search operators. [Exalead](#), for example, permits *atleast* and *proximity* searching. Their *atleast* function allows the searcher to find pages which feature a term prominently, which can be useful when you are searching for backgrounders on people or issues.

The proximity search function allows the searcher to find terms which occur close to each other, which can be useful when trying to unearth connections between people and events in the news. Speaking of proximity searching, [this](#) API allows proximity searching in Google results, albeit only where the terms you wish to find are no more than three words apart. [Here's](#) a practical overview of how this can help in journalistic research.

Search engine functions (in Google)

Here follows a look at just some of the advanced functions available to the searcher. As time passes, Google (and other engines) will no doubt provide even more means of tightening up your search by document type, or more general *type* of content.

I The Domain function: site:

Using the domain function to find academic experts

There are three factors involved:

- Subject term/s,
- A term connecting the subject to his/her profession (i.e. *expert*, *department*,

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- *professor* etc.), and
- The domain function: *site:.ac.uk* (for UK universities)

Find an expert in environmental law:

Compare: [environmental law expert](#)
With: [oil environmental law professor site:.ac.uk](#)

Find a UK expert in detecting fraud data:

Compare: [expert data fraud](#)
With: [fraud ~data professor site:.ac.uk](#)

For a full list of national and top-level domains, check [NORID domains](#).

Don't forget to check Google's Cached option if you find a page – it will show you the page as was when it was first indexed, so you won't miss out on your terms if the page has changed in the meantime. Also, don't forget to use <Control F> in your browser to locate terms in large/long documents.

Using the domain function to find local pressure groups/nimby groups/associations and non-commercial bodies.

Find pressure group/s opposed to the building of phone masts.

Compare: [group "telephone masts" opposed](#)
With: [group "telephone masts" opposed site:.org.uk](#)

You can also use the domain function to find discussions (and hence contributors) in Facebook, and other social networks.

See: ["I worked" "lehman brothers" site:facebook.com/topic](#)

You can't do this within Facebook, only through Google – see [here](#).

II The Occurances function: intitle:

For finding reliable backgrounders, bear in mind metadata standards used widely online. Bear in mind what is included in professional sites in their web page *titles*.

Say you want to find background (analysis, not news, professional not amateur) on Somalia's troubled political background:

Compare: [ukfi background](#)
With: [ukfi intitle:Q&A](#)

You could also try: *depth/comment/analysis//brief/background*

You could also try this in the url too - *inurl:*

III The Format selector for finding statistics:

Compare: [house prices greenwich](#)
With: ["house prices" greenwich 2007 filetype:xls](#)

Also try switching format to Powerpoint for finding experts on subjects (who will likely have demonstrated their expertise in presentations). You can also try Bing's contains function to do a similar job – see [oil spill bp contains:flv](#)

IV The language selector for article (don't select, then select English):

Compare: [scudetto "silvio berlusconi"](#) (with and without filter switched to English).

V The link function : link:

Use the link: function to discover who is linking to a site (can highlight bias, or partisanship).

Finding contributors via social networks

[Facebook](#) is particularly popular with users in and around London (and across the UK more widely).

Many of its users are interested in international social and political issues, and some are experts in their field – the site contains groups based around themes and issues from around the world. See [these results](#), containing groups found when searching for *ecology society*.

Likewise, Myspace has similar groups – try searching [their groups](#) for [alternative energy](#).

As for Twitter, take a look at [Tweepz](#) and [advanced Twitter search](#) (using location).

But bear in mind other social networks appeal to other communities around the world. For example, if you have a Google account and are interested in finding contributors/opinion from South America – give [orkut](#) a try. It's [hugely popular in Brazil](#).- you will need a profile to search, but once you have one select communities from your homepage, and search.

Likewise, [Badoo](#) is more popular in Europe than in the UK, and they are even making an effort to progress in [the Russian Social Network market](#) - see [these](#) Google results.

But perhaps the best place to start is amongst those services which allow online communities to create their own social networks. Try searching [Ning](#) for [environment UK](#).

If you are looking for professional communities then, aside from Facebook's networks, [LinkedIn](#) is probably your best bet. See [here](#) for some advice on LinkedIn's strengths and weaknesses. It may be possible to find contributors and potentially useful actuality from photo-sharing network Flickr. Try [this](#) tag-search for *local pollution*.

Contributor finding in pre-web 2.0 sources

Try using Google scholar to keep up-to-date on the latest academic findings (and experts) in your field – see [these](#) results for biofuels and the UK.

Don't discount the research value in Amazon advanced – a great place to find experts around subject matter – for example see [these](#) results ordered by date, for import export environment, or [these](#) for import export climate.

And don't discount the various forums, and boards people use to express themselves, and flag up issues worth investigating, like [Omgili](#) – you can even create your own search engine like [this one](#) ([here's](#) more info on how I made it) to track folks who contribute to different online forums.

[Google Groups](#) (formerly Usenet groups) are a great place to find informed (and sometimes ill-informed!) opinion and expertise on all sorts of issues. Try searching for [biofuels](#), and refine by group type (ie Science and Technology).

Listserve are distribution lists of information, administered usually by people interested/motivated by particular issues (sometimes by academics and experts). Here is the global directory for listserve, and [here](#) is a list of listserve around the issue of renewable energy.

Expert Witness directories offer a good means of finding specialist, professional contributors. They are used primarily by (and designed for) lawyers and solicitors to help them find expert witnesses for their case work. But researchers can find such tools just as useful – and below are a couple of links containing free alternatives:

[Expert Witness Directories](http://www.venables.co.uk/experts.htm): <http://www.venables.co.uk/experts.htm>

[Legal Hub \(see Directories tab\)](http://www.legalhub.co.uk/): <http://www.legalhub.co.uk/>

[Lawyer Locator](http://www.lawyerlocator.co.uk/): <http://www.lawyerlocator.co.uk/>

With regard to the vetting process for the Legal Hub Bar Directory and Expert Witness Directory, these individuals require references from two solicitors or barristers (holding practicing certificates) who have instructed them within the last three years. Not a failsafe approach (from a research perspective), but there are at least checks and balances in place. Of course, when using sites like these you will have to plead poverty to avoid paying their astronomical consultancy fees – its a good idea to be upfront about this before getting into the detail of a possible interview.

There are also a number of specialist scientific sources out there you may not know about – especially useful for finding (mostly western) academics in the sciences, but also stories, articles, press releases and research for all manner of niche fields. They include [Alphagalileo](#) and [Eurekalert](#).