



He Who Seeks, Shall Find ... Something!

What a paradise of 'access to information' I enjoy these days as I sit here at my desk! Bookshelves surround me on every wall, some of them running from floor to ceiling, and if nothing there contains the data I need, my computer sits on the desk, connected 24 hours a day to the internet. There is nothing I can't find!

Perhaps.

I was writing a story about printmaking for my newsletter earlier this afternoon, and got to a point where I needed to find an accurate reference for something that I was only partially remembering. I knew I had seen something on this topic on a web site I visited some time ago, but there might also be a reference in one of the books on my shelf. Which source to check? This room is cold today; I'm huddled in my kotatsu, and can't reach the bookshelf, perhaps I should start with the internet.

I begin to type my search request, but ... no - I remember now. It's in that book over there; I clearly remember reading it. No internet; I'll use my library.

I get out of the kotatsu and bring the heavy book back to the table. Yes, this book feels familiar, and I'm starting to remember more about it. But cracking it open I find that it has no good index. There is no way to 'search'. Perhaps I should indeed use the internet. I put the book down and begin to type once more ...

No; I can't give up that easily. I know the information I need is right there in that book! I remember more about it - I certainly can't remember a page number, but I do remember that it was up on the top part of a left-hand page. Books are like that - I can remember a 'visual' image of the data, even if I can't remember the actual data itself. I begin to flip flip through the book.

But either I flip just a bit too carelessly, or my memory about the page location is at fault, because when I get to the end, I have found nothing. No way around it, I'll have to use the internet. Back at the keyboard, I type in the search request, and a split second later, the first results come up onto the screen.

Success! There it is, the very first entry in the results! I click the link ... and am routed to a page on my own website! This is the reference I am partially remembering, but there is not enough data here, I will indeed have to look up the original source of the information - somewhere inside this large book beside me on the table.

I begin to search through the book again, much more slowly than before, looking carefully at each page. It seems that I haven't looked at this book for quite some time; much of it seems quite new to me. I pause for a minute to read a few paragraphs, and then a few pages later, pause again. This book is full of interesting information on woodblock printmaking! An hour or so later, I am still absorbed in reading. Just what I had originally been looking for has long been forgotten - this new topic seems much more interesting! - and my newsletter story will be going off on a different tangent to the original plan.

They tell us that the internet is going to replace libraries, and that reading news on the screen is going to replace newspapers, but I for one, certainly hope that the 'new' methods of accessing information will allow for a healthy dose of serendipity. After all, it's when you don't know what you are looking for, that you are most likely to find it!

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