

Radio Days – 2012-09-08

Tip of the Week – Try It Out

During the week I was talking to another photographer and he stated that his camera could only take two pictures a second. This was too slow for him because he enjoyed taking photos of action subjects where, often, the only way to capture the action was to use the automatic multi-shot feature of his camera. We talked about ways to increase the number of photos that he could take each second. Because he had a digital camera he could try anything without any cost as no film and processing were involved.

The suggestions that we came up with were:

- Take smaller photos. My camera can take three sizes of raw photos and/or three sizes of JPEG photos. Try different sizes and see if the quality and speed were acceptable.
- Use a faster card. He had a fairly slow storage card so a faster card may have speeded things up quite a lot.

It then occurred to me that I have used this process to learn much of what I know about how to use computers. Using this method of trying new things may help you as well. One of the tricks involved is to ensure that you do not do anything which could damage any of your important data files. There are many ways that you can do this, and they all depend on the program involved.

You could, of course, have a backup of all your work so you only need to recovery your data file from backup should your work fail for some reason.

- In your word processor or spreadsheet program you could either copy your existing document or create a new document. This way you can try something without losing all the work that you have already done.
- In your email program you could send an email to yourself to see what the changes to a template or signature look like in a new email.
- In your accounting program you could create a new test company file or copy your existing company file and try new technique in the test or copy company file.

For too many people the thought of trying something new, especially where computers are involved, is far too frightening to contemplate. If you take the precaution of using another document or company file there is no danger because you can always revert to the real file very simply.

Try this technique and see what you can learn! It will cost you nothing to go through every menu option and see them all: you will learn a lot about what is possible in your programs.

Searching The Internet

Most people are familiar with a search engine like Google but for those who have difficulty in telling the difference between a *web browser*, a *web site* and a *search engine* here is a brief introduction.

- A *web browser* is a program which you use to browse the internet. The most common web browser is *Internet Explorer*. Internet Explorer is the web browser which comes with Windows and is recognised by its logo: a big blue E. There are some other web browsers which I have mentioned before: in alphabetical order they are Chrome, Firefox, Opera and Safari.
- A *web site* is some pages found on the web. My website is www.tobybainbridge.com and you get to it by typing that address into the address bar of a web browser. Your browser will then display my home page: from here you can go to any of my pages. You could also type the address of another web site into the address bar to be taken to that other web site.



- A *search engine* is a *web site* which helps you find information on the internet. There are many search engines: two common ones are *Google* and *Bing*. The job of a search engine is to give you a list of websites which match your search terms. I searched for *search engines* and found over 200 million entries. This suggests that vague, general search terms are going to overwhelm you with information.

Search Techniques

The best search queries will give you a small number of results so that you can have some chance of finding the most relevant. Writing a good search query is like writing a good job advertisement: the ideal job advertisement would find the one person who wants to do the job which you need done to the highest needed standard for the lowest wage. Just as this job advertisement is not possible to write, so the perfect search query does not exist.

Like so many parts of life you are chasing a moving target: the results which will come from a single search query will vary depending on:

- When you search
- What other searches you have performed recently
- Which computer you use to perform the search

All of this might well make you despair before you even start. However, being able to search the internet is very valuable so it is a skill which is worth practicing.

There are a number of ways which you can use to refine your searches. Here is a small list of ways to refine your searches.

Search Within Web Site

If you know, for example, that you want to find results which are best found in Microsoft's web site then you would add *site: microsoft.com* after your search term. For example, you are frustrated by people who keep sending you Word documents or Excel spreadsheets which you cannot read because they are created in a later version of Word or Excel than the one which you have on your computer. To do this you would use a search term like:

view documents from word 2010 site: microsoft.com

The first two results from this search are the two which will be most useful. The first result is for a free program from Microsoft which allows people without Word to read and print Word documents and the second is an update to earlier versions of Word which allows your version to read and write documents which have been created in Word 2007 or Word 2010. Both of these updates are common ones which my clients have needed in the past.

Search Within URL

A *URL* is the address of a web site. A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) looks like all the web addresses which you see around you. The URL for my web site is www.tobybainbridge.com: if you type this into the address bar of a web browser it will take you to my web site.

If, for example, you had seen a website which advertised pet foods and your thought that the URL (address) contained *kitty* then you would type a query like:

inurl:kitty

Please note that you must have the colon (:) after *inurl* and that you cannot have a space after the colon. These are the rules and you will not get the result that you expect if you do not obey these rules.

Searching For Images, Etc

Both Google and Bing will also let you search for images and for YouTube clips. This means that much of the internet is available at the flick of a mouse. Please remember that, if at first you do not succeed, try again.

Searching is an inexact science and the more searching you do, the better you will become. As with so many things in life, searching is part art and part science: just keep doing it and you will become better.

Google's Advanced Search Guide

There are, of course, all sorts of things which you can do when searching. Google, as befits the best-known search engine in the world, has its own advanced search guide. The URL is shown at the end of this document for those of you who find that normal searching produces too many results. After all, who has time to search through 200 million results?

For dedicated searchers this guide can, perhaps, be the next best thing to whatever is their next best thing. Remember: Keep On Keeping On!

Further Information

Web browsers	www.google.com/chrome www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox www.opera.com www.apple.com/safari
Search engines	www.google.com.au www.bing.com
Google advanced search	www.google.com.au/advanced_search
Google searching guide	www.googleguide.com