Web experiments and test collections: Are they meaningful?

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David Hawking and Nick Craswell coordinate the TREC Web experiments.

Introduction: TREC (Web) experiments

x Many groups participate in the same experiment, with fixed queries, documents and "goals".

   x Many groups: Invention and confirmation
   x Central judging: Blind and fair
   x Static crawl. Reproduce results. Reusable?
   x Debate on methodology

x (We know what works in TREC ad hoc. Meaningful.)

x Web. What works?

History of the TREC Web track

1998 Link ranking papers. No WT.

WT99–WT01 Web data and short queries.

    Meaning: Links $\not\Rightarrow$ Relevance

2001 SIGIR: Searching for home pages by name

$$\text{Links} \Rightarrow \text{Home pages}$$
$$\text{Full text search} \not\Rightarrow \text{Home pages}$$

WT01 Links and URL type $\Rightarrow$ Home pages (meaningful)

WT02 GOV, Named pages & Topic distillation

Topic distillation

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Relevance ranking "Computer science"                              Relevant Distilled
  tsg.anu.edu.au/Services/Ais/ATLES/xtable.csv                        x
  cs.anu.edu.au/pipermail/seminars/2002-March/thread.html             x
  cs.anu.edu.au/pipermail/seminars/2002-March/subject.html            x
  cs.anu.edu.au/pipermail/seminars/2002-March/author.html             x
  cs.anu.edu.au/pipermail/seminars/2002-March/date.html               x
  cs.anu.edu.au/pipermail/seminars/2002-March/index.html              x
  anulib.anu.edu.au/clusters/science/subjects/comput.html             x
  cs.anu.edu.au/lib/cs-oz.shtml                                       x
  cs.anu.edu.au/lib/cs-oz.html                                        x
  cs.anu.edu.au/~David.Wolfram/CTTcites.html                          x
Topic distillation "Computer science"
  feit.anu.edu.au/                                                     x        x
  cs.anu.edu.au/                                                       x        x
  anulib.anu.edu.au/clusters/science/collection/
  geography.anu.edu.au/
  engn.anu.edu.au/                                                     x        x
  tltsu.anu.edu.au/                                                    x        x
  ecocomm.anu.edu.au/
  anusf.anu.edu.au/                                                    x        x
  www.anu.edu.au/legal/copyrit.html
  ecocomm.anu.edu.au/departments/stat/welcome.html
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Some issues

x   Binary judgments

x   Can't do Google-scale experiments

   x   Commercially interesting: Site, enterprise, 'GOV'

x   Site-site and enterprise-enterprise variation

x   Need:

   x   Keep developing methodology (ideas and criticism)
   x   Find out what works (e.g. anchors)