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Search Engines Report

Search Engines & Their History

Every day we take for granted the vast information available at our fingertips at a moment's notice thanks to the invention of search engines. The most notable one, Google, has become a cornerstone in most people's lives with over 16 billion search queries worldwide in just a single day (Cardillo). Even though we use search engines like Google every day, most people don't know about its predecessors that paved the path for its eventual creation.

In 1990 the first search engine named Archie was invented by Alan Emtage at McGill University (Mapes). Archie was made to catalog and search for downloadable files on FTP sites, limited in its capabilities of the time it didn't index content of the sites it only gave the user URL links to download files (Rose). In the years following, many more search engines would be founded each adding their own unique features. Some being JumpStation in 1993, Yahoo! In 1994, Lycos in 1995, BackRub in 1996, and in 1998 Google officially launched.

Since their inception in 1990 search engines have evolved to take on more and greater tasks. We have come a long way from Archies' limited capabilities of only being able to fetch downloadable files to today with Google's vast amount of search features such as its search engine optimization (SEO) abilities, image search, voice search, song recognition, and much more.

How Spammers Hijack Search Engine Results

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For as long as the internet has been around, scammers have used it to craft schemes to steal unwitting users' information and money. As search engines have evolved and become more sophisticated, so have scammers. One of the most common tricks today is known as SEO poisoning. SEO poisoning is described by hackread.com as “a malicious strategy where cybercriminals manipulate search engine algorithms to rank harmful websites prominently in search results. These websites often contain malware, phishing schemes, or scams designed to steal sensitive information. (Amir)” From August 2023 to January 2024 there was a 60% increase in malware detections stemming from malicious SEO attacks (Amir). These trends show just how advanced and prevalent these tactics are becoming, making it more important than ever for both businesses and individuals to stay alert.

Some ways to identify a potential scam or a suspicious website or email is to look out for a couple common red flags. Make sure to double check website URLs, watch out for deals that are too good to be true, and check the URL for HTTPS security. Some good practices to keep to avoid getting caught in a scam would be to enable multi factor authentication, verify the URL, and use trusted security tools such as an antivirus software (Stephenson).

The next time you search online, it's worth remembering that even the most trustworthy-looking links can hide risks. By staying alert and taking a proactive approach, we can help keep our digital spaces safe. These practices are not foolproof, but they are basic steps one can follow to have a safer time browsing the web.

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