

Fine-tune Web Research with Toolbars

By Partha Bhattacharya

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Partha Bhattacharya
ezypost@rediffmail.com

EzyPost <http://www.ezypost.com/index.htm>

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Toolbar - what is it?

In most cases, a toolbar is like a main menu-bar residing alongside in popular browsers, usually Microsoft's Internet Explorer. The toolbar is termed so because while surfing the net, it provides a viewer many options that aim at bringing focus to and fine-tune browsing. Toolbars of various hues are available free of cost, including one from Google, though there're some like Internet Research Toolbar, who offer toolbars at a cost.

Does toolbar help?

For people who believe information is invaluable, a toolbar is of great help. Nobody denies there is a wealth of information available on the world-wide-web. Yet, to many, getting precise information is more often than not a frustrating experience. If you think search engine is the only answer to your online queries, think again. The fact is search engines do provide *searching* answers, but perhaps you need some more....something more accurate and relevant. That is to say, you'd need to fine-tune your searches again and again. And this is where the toolbars come as great help. Toolbars do not eliminate the pain of searching....No, it only assists in cutting down your browsing time so you can devote more time to do what you want to with the information collected.

There is a subtle difference in the working of various toolbars. Thus, while search toolbars enable searching in your favorite search engines directly, meta search utilities allow searching multiple search engines simultaneously. In today's story, we'll explore about 10 toolbars of repute and the *tools* each of them offer. In the next issue, 8 more toolbars will be discussed. Hopefully, questions like *Do I need a toolbar?*, *Is there a toolbar for me?*, *Which toolbar offers the most?*, etc. will get resolved to one's satisfaction.

Teoma SearchBar

<http://sp.ask.com/docs/teoma/toolbar/>

Dynamically upgradable (meaning, new features are automatically upgraded), Teoma Search Bar offers direct search results from Teoma search engine. Other than allowing dictionary look-up and ability to highlight search terms (different colors for different words / word combinations) in the search pages, Teoma Search Bar also provides for easy e-mailing the search page with the click of a button.

AskJeeves Toolbar

<http://sp.ask.com/docs/toolbar/helpbuttons.html>

Like Teoma, AskJeeves Toolbar too is dynamically upgradable. There are many tools on offer, such as Search Ask (Ask Jeeves search results), Search News (news headlines), Search Weather, Search Dictionary, Get Map (of any location within USA), etc. Highlighting search terms and emailing search page too are available.

Groowe Toolbar

<http://www.groowe.com/>
<http://www.pagetracer.com/>

Now with version 1.2 (June 4, 2003), Groowe toolbar is proving a popular choice. Query your term fast and easy in many search engines and directories, viz. Google, Yahoo, AllTheWeb, MSN, Teoma, AltaVista and more. Browse categories and directories of search engines with minimum fuss. Image search, audio search, video search --and what not-- are all provided by Groowe as also options to search jobs, downloads and shopping sites. A very helpful toolbar indeed.

UltraBar IE Toolbar

<http://www.ultrabar.com/>

UltraBar offers 3 versions, one free, the other two paid versions, namely UltraBar Co-Brand and Ultrabar Private Label. UltraBar has many similarities with Google Toolbar, like highlighting search terms, jumping to selected search term, etc. The UltraBar options is a good tool. One can add more search engines than what are presently offered, and change the appearance of toolbar buttons as well.

Yahoo! Companion

<http://companion.yahoo.com/>

Companion allows toolbar to be personalized with one's favorite Yahoo! services and also providing supports like searching Yahoo!, Yahoo! mail alert, etc.

SearchHippo Toolbar

<http://www.searchhippo.com/toolbar/>

Meant for IE, SearchHippo Toolbar offers *HipRank*, which is akin to Google's PageRank or

Alexa's Traffic Rank. HipRank provides values within 0 to 100 range, higher values for a webpage meaning higher traffic levels. The toolbar allows customization and also offers SMS messaging that permits sending a webpage straight from browser to your friends' phone, pager, or email. SearchHippo says in the US the toolbar's *SMS* facility automatically converts friends' phone numbers into their carrier and location.

Dave's Quick Search Deskbar

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/dqsd>

<http://www.dqsd.net/>

Dave's QSD is in fact an add-on for Windows Desktop Taskbar, that allows quick search in most important search engines and has useful built-in tools like a clock, calculator, currency converter, calendar, translation facility and more. The toolbar is available at SourceForge under GPL and allows adding own functionality. In fact, HotBot Quick Search Deskbar is based on Dave's Quick Search Deskbar.

Googlebar

<http://googlebar.mozdev.org/>

Mozdev's Googlebar levels the playing field in that it emulates Google's toolbar for Netscape/Mozilla browsers. Mozdev also provides emulation of Yahoo! Companion toolbar in Mozilla (<http://companion.mozdev.org/>).

Alexa Toolbar

<http://download.alexa.com/>

One of our favorites is Alexa Toolbar. Alexa provides search results in Google search engine only, but other toolbar features are quite helpful. For example, for any website being seen in the browser, Alexa instantly provides its traffic rank (which in fact is 3 months average). Clicking the link will take to Alexa's webpage where more details about the website are available, including incoming links, more traffic information and much much more. Another good about Alexa toolbar is its showing links to some more websites that are similar to the one being presently viewed. Highly recommended.

Google Toolbar

<http://toolbar.google.com/>

Arguably the most-used of its type, Google Toolbar is operable only in IE browsers and available in many languages. The Toolbar Options allow customizing the layout of toolbar as one wishes. Among many features Google Toolbar offers are Google Search, Search Site, PageRank, Page Info and Word Find. Page Info shows links that connect to the webpage being viewed as also similar other webpages, besides a cached snapshot of the webpage. For full detail about Google Toolbar, view the help page located at <http://toolbar.google.com/help.html> . In the article, *Maximum Google* [<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,110323,00.asp>], PCWorld has provided a good analysis about searching in Google including information on Google Toolbar. All in all, a Google Toolbar is a must-have for fine-tuning search options.

PBar Toolbar

<http://www.pbar.net/>

PBar's is a feature-rich toolbar, free for end-users. Armed with smart tools like *Spy Slayer* (a spyware remover), *Pop-Up Ad Stopper*, *Privacy Protector* and more, PBar also has mail and news search, web surfing and advanced search, besides such useful services as webpage translation, send-email-to-friend option, terms-highlight, multi-language support, etc. Premium service offers customized branding and many other options. For that matter, even free PBar service includes number of choices for your toolbar. A very useful toolbar indeed.

UCMore Toolbar

http://www.ucmore.com/ucmore_toolbar.htm

Like Alexa, UCMORE too finds other websites similar and related to the webpage being viewed. Depending on a search query, UCMORE Toolbar's *Enlightened Searching* displays category-wise related websites from Google, MSN, Yahoo or any other site.

SearchWolf Meta-Search

<http://www.trellian.net/search/index.html>

A desktop utility, Trellian's SearchWolf provides an easy interface with multiple options to search one or more search engines simultaneously without opening your browser. Search results are listed by page titles of webpages which can then be sorted and selected for viewing in browser. Detailed report for a search can also be obtained.

WebFerret Meta-Search

<http://www.ferretsoft.com/download.htm>

A desktop meta-search utility for Windows, WebFerret can also be installed as an integrated toolbar in IE. Search queries are looked in several search engines concurrently and the results can be sorted by webpage name, address, source, and more. Features like duplicate removal, webpage validation and keyword suggestions make WebFerret a valuable search-tool. The paid version, WebFerretPro is designed to search more engines and directories and even offers a ranking option for the webpages found by a particular search. Highly recommended.

Copernic Agent Basic

<http://www.copernic.com/en/products/agent/basic.html>

Like WebFerret, Copernic Agent Basic too has integrated toolbar for IE. Some of the features include search history in separate folders, searching found webpages using keywords or boolean expressions, saving preferred pages, ability to search in more than 90 search engines in 10 categories, automatic search engine updating, and more.

Visicom Dynamic Toolbar

<http://toolbar.visicommedia.com/en/products.html>

Visicom's dynamic toolbar comes in 2 flavors, Standard and Pro. The advantage of Visicom dynamic toolbar is that it can be branded with one's own logo complete with auto-update/install/uninstall options. Configuration file enables specifying toolbar features, like menus, links and buttons. There are more features that can be seen clicking the link above.

Internet Research Toolbar

<http://www.internet-research-toolbar.com/index.html>

IRT's strong point is its seamless integration with Flexity database. Any piece of saved web-information becomes a data record that can be easily retrieved in need. The data recorded are not only the meta-data, but page contents as well. IRT's interface provides easy-to-follow window for the saved contents making further research much less daunting. IRT is a preferred choice for those who seek web information to compile essays, reports, research papers, etc. IRT offers 30-day trial before buying one.

BestToolBars

<http://www.besttoolbars.net/>

BestToolBars offers customized IE toolbars with many features for heavy net traffic, usually portals. Source code and full technical support are also provided.

HydraLinks

http://www.hydralinks.com/product_description.htm

iLOR's HydraLinks works behind the scene when browsing. Moving mouse over a link instantly pops a small window containing 4 options therein. For example, the option *Put in my list* permits saving the link, image, graphic or an entire page in the folder *My List* and can be seen immediately or later singly or all together. *My List* can be emailed too to whom you want to. To know about more features HydraLinks offers, click the link above.

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