Going beyond Google: the invisible web in teaching and learning

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The problems of searching the invisible web have been covered for some time in information literacy sessions at Lincoln University, so this book was an immediate candidate for investigation. The unfortunate reliance on general-purpose search engines has become somewhat accepted nowadays, but that does not mean the problem has diminished – though, as the authors state in their preface, 'the gap between the visible and the invisible web is definitely narrowing'. For this reason the book is firmly practical as well as theoretical and the subtitle gives the clue: 'the invisible web in *teaching and learning*'. To this end, the authors set out their intention to:

'… *fundamentally change the "research process" as currently undertaken by students and redirect learners toward information beyond that found through general-purpose search engines.*'

The book's first part investigates the nature of the visible and invisible web, and explains the issues with clarity. The familiar litany of students' almost total reliance on certain web search engines is presented, as well as their mainly false assumptions about quality, coverage and worth. This gap in understanding is supported by the results of some user studies in the US that are quoted in the book; the need to disabuse students about their reliance on these engines is still evident.

In pursuit of this aim, the second part of the book gives examples of strategies to excavate the invisible web, using web directories and vertical and specialised search engines, and it touches on new

initiatives such as the semantic web. Practical suggestions are made for teaching about the invisible web, including useful activities and programmes of instruction. These contain some good ideas, and some of these may be adapted into sessions at Lincoln.

In common with any book on searching the web, the content will be, and to some extent already has been, overtaken by new initiatives; this is the nature of this particular beast. Recent developments in the semantic web, federated searching, next-generation OPACs, initiatives by such giants as (ironically) Google and Microsoft, the contribution of social networking software, are all moving things along at a cracking pace. This is recognised in the last chapter, 'Visible versus invisible web: shifting boundaries'. However, as an overview of the complexity of web searching and as a practical primer for introducing students to an understanding of these difficulties, *Going beyond Google* is a very useful addition to the literature.