WhoWhere?[3] – An E–mail Index

If you failed finding information about a person with *AltaVista*, *WhoWhere?* offers a second try. Like for *AltaVista*, *the information available on WhoWhere? is gathered from public sources available on the Internet.**[4] *I.e.*, the information for the *WhoWhere?* database is obtained by systematically scanning Web pages, Newsgroups, and anonymous ftp archives.

There are two reasons why searching *WhoWhere?* for names and addresses can be more successful than searching *AltaVista* or similar Search Engines. Reason number one:

The *WhoWhere?* email information content is growing rapidly, as people add and update[5] information into the *secure, voluntary and public WhoWhere?* database.*[6]

Good! ... However, when did you volunteer the last time for something? It is the same as with, *e.g.*, the X.500[7] directory. These things are much talked about for years, but next to nothing useful shows up. So reason number one is not very convincing. But check reason number two:

If you aren't sure how to spell a name, don't worry! Type in what you know and *WhoWhere?* will find matches based on strings of 2 or more characters. You can even search on initials!*[8]

That is much more powerful indeed! Let us give it a try with `"h flack"` as *Person's Name* on the *WhoWhere?*[9] page. There are quite a few Flacks around. Maybe you have to scan the list for a minute, but here he is:

Name: Howard Flack
Email: flack@cui.unige.ch[10]
Email provider: University of Geneva, Switzerland[11]
Last Updated: May '96

Name: Howard Flack
Email: Howard.Flack@cryst.unige.ch[12]
Email provider: University of Geneva, Switzerland[13]
Last Updated: April '96

The only difficulty left now is to decide which address to use. In this case, the more sophisticated *Howard.Flack@cryst.unige.ch* address looks more promising, but in general you cannot know.

[1] http://www.iucr.ac.uk/iucr–top/welcome.html
[2] int.index.html
[3] http://www.whowhere.com/
[4] #Cite2
[5] http://www.whowhere.com/addentry.html
[6] #Cite2
[7] int.x500.html
[8] #Cite2
[9] http://www.whowhere.com/
[10] mailto:flack@cui.unige.ch
[11] http://query1.whowhere.com/jwz/showorg.wsrch?121397
[12] mailto:Howard.Flack@cryst.unige.ch
[13] http://query1.whowhere.com/jwz/showorg.wsrch?121397

We had a problem finding the e–mail address of J.V. Smith. Now, with *WhoWhere?,* we can try again, entering "`J V Smith`". The result is: *Over 500 approximate matches*. No good. For the next try, we can submit additional information, in this case "`chicago`" leaps to our mind. However, there are still *119 approximate matches*, two of which are ranked as *Highly Relevant Responses* –– but not what we are looking for. Smiths are always difficult to find, and this fact is not even changed by the most sophisticated Search Engines we have today.

* Citations taken from the *About WhoWhere?*[14] page.

Telephone!

As a matter of fact, J.V. Smith has a personal Home page, as well as an e–mail address which is listed on (at least) two Web pages! This means, the reason for the unsuccessful search is just the clumsy choice of keywords. With *AltaVista*, "`smith near joseph and chicago and mail and zeolite`" does the trick. The result is just two matches, both of which contain the e–mail address.

However, guessing keywords can take you forever (and maybe there is really nothing to find), and finally you end up having a conversation like this (real!) one:

From rwgk@laplace.csb.yale.edu Fri Mar 29 13:48:54 1996
...
BTW: How did you find his e–mail address? I once tried when I was still in Zurich, but without success.
Ralf
From njas@research.att.com[15] Fri Mar 29 15:09:08 1996
i called his office!

Continue with Quality of Search Results.[16]

[Index][17] [Search Engines Introduction][18] [Yahoo!][19] [AltaVista][20] – 10th Sept. 1996 – © Ralf W. Grosse Kunstleve[21] – **Not to be copied or reproduced without permission** – Author's current manuscript[22]

[14] http://www.whowhere.com/docs/about.html
[15] http://netlib.att.com/math/sloane/doc/home.html
[16] int.search.engines.html#quality
[17] int.index.html
[18] int.search.engines.html
[19] int.yahoo.html
[20] int.altavista.html
[21] http://xplor.csb.yale.edu/~rwgk/
[22] http://xplor.csb.yale.edu/~rwgk/scnet/whowhere.html