CIS 443/543 User Interfaces
Exercise #6 Information Search and Visualization

WORK in PAIRS! Please turn in your work and keep a copy for discussion in class. I will grade this with either (submitted and did a reasonable job) or (not-submitted or a lousy job).

Due: Monday, February 20 at 10:00am

QUESTION #1: Lecture 16, slide 4, describes three basic tasks for information activities: 1) information gathering, 2) information evaluation and 3) information analysis and interpretation. These are done iteratively as the user gradually refines the search until the information is found.

For each of the following search engine websites:

- Google [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- GigaBlast [www.gigablast.com](http://www.gigablast.com)
- Mamma [www.mamma.com](http://www.mamma.com)
- Teoma [www.teoma.com](http://www.teoma.com)
- the BigBlogZoo [www.bigblogzoo.com](http://www.bigblogzoo.com)
- Flamenco search [bailando.sims.berkeley.edu/flamenco.html](http://bailando.sims.berkeley.edu/flamenco.html)

a) Describe what information is presented to the user and what functions are available to the user to help iteratively narrow the search.

b) Try to compare these different search engines.

c) From an information gathering standpoint, which is best and why?

QUESTION #2: Implementing a user interface sometimes requires the developer to take an ethical stance. For example, Google has received a rain of criticism for its decision last month to launch a Chinese Internet-search service that will censor query results on topics such as Tibetan independence and human rights to comply with Beijing's restrictions on political content. (Read the recent NY Times article Feb 15, 2006 “House Member Criticizes Internet Companies for Practices in China” [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/15/technology/15cnd-internet.html?ex=1297659600&en=1d2dce56f6c4a728&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/15/technology/15cnd-internet.html?ex=1297659600&en=1d2dce56f6c4a728&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)) This conflicts with statements by Google about its goals as a company: “The company isn't run for the long-term value of our shareholders but for the long-term value of our end users,” CEO Eric Schmidt said in this week's Time magazine.

a) Explain both sides of this issue. If you were Larry Page and Sergey Brin would you censor users’ query results?
b) What about privacy? Do you have the responsibility to protect your users’ private information from government enquiries? Do you have the responsibility to protect it from enquiries by other companies and people that work for you?

**QUESTION #3:** The Hermitage Web site was recently voted the best in Russia. It uses the QBIC engine developed by IBM for searching archives of world-famous art.
<http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/fcgi-bin/db2www/qbicSearch.mac/qbic?selLang=English>

a) Go to the QBIC Colour Search. Make a query and observe yourself (TAKE NOTES!). Did you get what you wanted? Critique the usability of the interface. What is the usefulness of this search?

b) Go to the QBIC Layout Search. Make a query and observe yourself (TAKE NOTES!). Did you get what you wanted? What is the usefulness of this search? Critique the usability of the interface.

**QUESTION #4:** Information Visualization with Tree Maps Go to the Smartmoney website: <http://www.smartmoney.com/marketmap/>

a) Examine the tree map. Find the company Google. How big is Google’s share of the technology market compared to Microsoft? What is the purpose of this visualization? Does it help making a decision? Critique the usability of this tree map interface.