

Search engines are source of learning

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Search engine use is not just part of our daily routines; it is also becoming part of our learning process, according to Penn State researchers.

The researchers sought to discover the cognitive processes underlying searching. They examined the search habits of 72 participants while conducting a total of 426 searching tasks. They found that search engines are primarily used for fact checking users' own internal knowledge, meaning that they are part of the [learning](#) process rather than simply a source for [information](#). They also found that people's learning styles can affect how they use search engines.

"Our results suggest the view of Web searchers having simple information needs may be incorrect," said Jim Jansen, associate professor of information sciences and technology. "Instead, we discovered that users applied simple searching expressions to support their higher-level information needs."

Jansen said the results of this study provide useful information about how [search engine](#) use has evolved over the past decade and clues about how to design better search engines to address users' learning needs in the future. He and Brian Smith, associate professor information sciences and technology and Danielle Booth, former Penn State student, published their findings in the November issue of *Information Processing and Management*.

"If we can incorporate cognitive, affective and situational aspects of a

person, there is the potential to really move search performance forward," Jansen said. "At its core, we are getting to the motivational elements of search."

Source: Pennsylvania State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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