

Michael Jackson tops Web's search charts in 2009

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In this June 25, 2009 file photo, Shayla Ivy cries as she holds a wax replica of Michael Jackson outside of Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum at The Venetian Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas the day Jackson died. Jackson's stunning death made him Yahoo's biggest star this year, propelling him to the top of the Internet company's annual breakdown of the most frequent online search requests. The list released Tuesday Dec. 1, 2009 is meant to provide a reading on our cultural pulse. (AP Photo/Laura Rauch)

(AP) -- Michael Jackson's stunning death made him the Internet's biggest star this year.

The quest to find out what happened to Jackson in his final hours on June 25 and celebrate his legacy elevated the late entertainer to the top of the Internet's search charts for 2009. On Yahoo, it ended singer

Britney Spears' four-year reign on top.

The annual lists released Tuesday were compiled separately by Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc., which combined handle two-thirds of the world's Internet searches.

Jackson also grabbed the top spot on the third-largest U.S. search engine, Microsoft Corp.'s Bing, which announced its rankings Sunday. AOL, which relies on Google's search technology, also had Jackson at No. 1.

The lists are meant to provide a reading on our cultural pulse.

As usual, people using Yahoo's search engine in 2009 seemed to be most interested in celebrities and other diversions, even against the sobering backdrop of the worst recession in 70 years.

Google's audience seem more interested in using the Internet to connect with friends and family.

The online hangout Facebook and Tuenti, a similar socializing site in Spain, both made Google's Top 10, as did the popular communications tool Twitter. Microsoft's latest Windows operating system also grabbed a spot. Singer Lady Gaga was the only other celebrity besides Jackson on Google's Top 10.

Google, which processes more than six times the search volume that Yahoo does, has had a more diverse mix in its annual search rankings. The self-proclaimed King of Pop follows former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin (2008) and Apple Inc.'s iPhone (2007) in Google's top spot.

Besides Jackson, the other new entrants on Yahoo's Top 10 list this year were: No. 2, "Twilight," the vampire story that has spawned two movies, including the recently released "New Moon," that are drawing hordes of

teenage girls and their mothers; No. 4, Megan Fox, an actress who starred in the movie "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen;" No. 8, Kim Kardashian, part of a family with their own reality TV series; and No. 9, NASCAR, an automobile racing league.

"New Moon" also made Google's Top 10.

The other half of Yahoo's list consisted of 2008 holdovers. With the defending champion Spears dropping to fifth, the others were: No. 3, WWE, or World Wrestling Entertainment; No. 6, Naruto, a character created for the Japanese art form known as anime; No. 7, top-rated television series "American Idol;" and No. 10, RuneScape, an online video game.

Barack Obama made Yahoo's top searches list in 2008 as a presidential candidate and the President-elect, but fell off after he took office in 2009. The others falling out of the Top 10 were all actresses: Miley Cyrus, Jessica Alba, Lindsay Lohan and Angelina Jolie.

Google also said Obama was among search requests that declined the most in 2009. Others losing steam included singer Amy Winehouse and actor Heath Ledger, whose January 2008 death triggered a searching frenzy.

Although the economy couldn't compete with entertainment in 2009, the hard times clearly weighed on people's minds. "Coupons" and "unemployment" were the most requested searches tied to finances, according to Yahoo.

Ask.com, another major search engine, focused its list on the most popular questions posed on its search engine. "How do I get out of debt?" was the second-ranking question of the year.

No. 1? "How much should I weigh?"

On The Net:

Google's list: <http://tinyurl.com/yjptwvj>

Yahoo's list: <http://tinyurl.com/ycxov9f>

Bing's list: <http://tinyurl.com/yk2vsrf>

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